

ISLAM

AND NATIONALISM

Contested Memories and the Demands of the Past

History Cultures in the
Modern Muslim World

EDITED BY
CATHARINA RAUDVERE

I&N



Islam and Nationalism

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Aims of the Series

One of the main objectives of this series is to explore the relationship between Islam, nationalism and citizenship in its diverse expressions. The series intends to provide a space for approaches that recognize the potential of Islam to permeate and inspire national forms of identification, and systems of government as well as its capacity to inspire oppositional politics, alternative modes of belonging and the formation of counterpublics in a variety of local, national or transnational contexts. By recognizing Islam as a transnational phenomenon and situating it within transdisciplinary and innovative theoretical contexts, the series will showcase approaches that examine aspects of the formation and activation of Muslim experience, identity and social action. In order to do justice to, and make better sense of contemporary Islam, the series also seeks to combine the best of current comparative, genuinely interdisciplinary research that takes on board cutting-edge work in sociology, anthropology, nationalism studies, social movement research and cultural studies as well as history and politics. As research on Islam as a form of identity is rapidly expanding and as interest both within the academia and the policy community is intensifying, we believe that there is an urgent need for coherent and innovative interventions, identifying the questions that will shape ongoing and future research and policy, and exploring and formulating conceptual and methodological responses to current challenges. The proposed series is intended to play a part in such an effort. It will do so by addressing a number of key questions that we and a large number of specialist interlocutors within the academia, the policy community, but also within Muslim organizations and networks have been grappling with. Our approach is premised on our understanding of Islam and the concept of the nation as resources for social identification and collective action in the broadest sense of these terms, and the need to explore the ways in which these interact with each other, inform public debate, giving rise to a diversity of experiences and practices. We would like to thank The Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Lund University, for their support in initiating the series.

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Editor

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History Cultures in the Modern Muslim World

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History as a Mirror and Places of Belonging: Some Remarks on Contested Memories and the Demands of the Past

Catharina Raudvere

This short introduction presents the background to the volume as part of on-going discussions within the interdisciplinary network Islam and Nationalism (ISNAT). Taking its point of departure in the existing research on collective memory in Muslim communities, this chapter argues in favour of perspectives that underline the importance of transnational/transregional contacts at work in contemporary Muslim history cultures. These contacts go back a long time and are essential for understanding how present-day concepts of culture and heritage are embedded in local and regional politics. The present volume provides concrete examples demonstrating the diversity in the Muslim world. The transnational links are constantly at stake when regimes, groups and interests navigate between ethnicity and religion and make use of stories, symbols and signs in rhetoric and policy-making. From this perspective memory is regarded as a border zone, and the focus in this volume is on the agents and agendas moving in between.

In collecting the essays for *Contested Memories and the Demands of the Past: History Cultures in the Modern Muslim World* it was therefore

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important to approach scholars who have both contributed to theoretical discussions of cultural memory and who base their analyses on first-hand knowledge of the Islamic world. As the table of contents reveals, this volume covers a broad swath of rhetorical uses of history and analyses both cultural and political representations of memory and belonging. In contrast to most contributions to the study of collective memory, which are often dominated by European and North American perspectives, this volume focuses on narratives and practices in the modern Muslim world. The scope is certainly not only the Middle East, but includes a global outlook encompassing Central Asia, the Balkans, East Africa as well as recent Muslim migrants in Europe and the Tatars of Poland. Where other memory studies tend to emphasize the world wars and their aftermath, the present collection intends to explore the employment of history and the politics of cultural memory in regions that have long been understudied with regard to the function of memory.

Although recent years have seen the development of a growing literature on collective memory and history cultures in the Muslim world (Ellis 2003; Cinar 2005; Özyürek 2006, 2007; Mehta 2007; Sa'di and Abu-Lughod 2007; Haugbølle 2010), it is still a minor part of the field in comparison to studies of the Holocaust and post-Soviet Eastern Europe. In the latter case, comparatively little attention has been paid to the Muslim communities in the region(s), with some very interesting exceptions (Verdery 1999; Boym 2001; Roudometof 2002, 2010; Todorova 2004, 2009, 2010a, b; Starck 2009; Tochman 2009; Zimmerman 2012; Halilovic; 2013). In its discussions (several of the published in this series), the Islam and Nationalism in Europe and the Muslim World network felt the need to present a volume in its series that discussed a broad range of history cultures. As the subtitle of the series—*National Identity Politics in Comparative Perspectives*—indicates, there has from the start been a certain emphasis on other angles than just the political in the network's discussions of nationalism. The link between memory and politics is therefore one of the central aspects of this volume, and it relates to the previous and forthcoming volumes in the series that look at nationalism, post-colonialism and globalization. Memory practices are evidently always political, as they underpin the construction of the past as well the present, and analyses of nationalist strategies have been the core theme of the series and the network behind it.

Some of the chapters in the present volume derive from discussions held during a workshop on the uses of history and the politics of memory in the Muslim world arranged at the Danish Institute in Damascus in October 2010. During the sessions, memory practices at various levels of society stood out as an understudied area, in contrast to the way in which political science studies, religious studies and ethnographic descriptions discuss expressions of belonging, markers of difference and manners of identification. In order to contribute to the study of history cultures in the Muslim world, a selected group of authors were invited to present cases. The authors were not tied to any specific theoretical paradigm within memory studies, but instead they were encouraged to provide in-depth analyses of the uses of history as a way to not only understand the past, but to conceptualize the future. The result is, consequently, an interdisciplinary approach based on diverse theoretical perspectives.

A deliberate choice has been made to go against some of the established academic trends. Thus, memory is not mainly studied through monuments or political manifestations, but rather from the perspective of how the concepts of culture and heritage are embedded in local and regional politics and exemplified in concrete examples demonstrating the diversity in the Muslim world. All the chapters are founded on considerable knowledge of Muslim life in the specific regions and are written by scholars with proficiency in analysing the local particularities as well as transnational/transregional contacts. By applying different scales in the studies, the authors discuss the transmission of memory not only from the perspective of how local practices are influenced by national and international politics, but also how those in positions of power draw on the past—symbols, narratives, public performances—in order to endorse their legitimacy and impact ‘from below’.

From their different disciplinary perspectives, the authors have been invited to contribute with chapters on how cultural memory is established and used at the national level—in official history writing, through personal history, the fashioning of educational curricula and through media strategies—as well as in the interface with both artistic expressions, popular culture and everyday practices in the Muslim world at large. The representations of collective memory have been one of the foremost tools in national identity politics, grass-roots mobilisation, theological debates over Islam and general discussions on what constitutes ‘the modern in the Middle East’ as well as in Muslim diaspora environments. Few, if any, contemporary conflicts in

the region can be understood in depth without a certain focus on various uses of history, memory cultures and religious meta-narratives at all societal levels as well as in art and literature. The studies are united by an interest in the reformulation of memories and histories after colonialism and after the end of the cold war, and the means by which they are transmitted. In some cases in the book, this reformulation has been achieved by means of the rhetoric for the mobilization for larger movements; in others, in more small scale representation such as complex artistic expressions that lends itself to immediate multiple readings/understandings, as any representation always is, in Bougarel's terminology, polysemic and paradoxical (2007).

The theoretical point of departure from Halbwachs, Assmann and Nora dominated the field of memory studies for a long time. Recurring themes in this body of work have been informed by their and their followers seminal writings, where atrocities, trauma and genocide are represented in symbols and monuments and in the construction of memory in the public sphere and where national mythologies are interpreted in civil society and the quests for origin, authentic culture and stable identities are at the core. Connerton (1989) demonstrated how narrative and public performance work together and how the very enactment of this combination culminates in embodied memories that can last for generations. In the wake of Assmann's (1995) distinction between cultural memory and collective memory, many studies afterwards dealt with the public representation of traumatic pasts and significant events. Alongside the earlier approaches to memory, a certain shift from a strict focus on narratives, performances and places toward local reception and interpretation has left its mark in the field. During the last decade, it has been hard to miss a larger emphasis on active agents, performance, the construction of multiple meanings, the centrality of irony in the seemingly banal and in dichotomous rhetoric. The agency perspective has been further developed by Jay Winter (1995), who has expressed a preference for the concept of remembrance in relation to memory (and its more passive connotations) in order to highlight the active agents, their tools and their choices.

The chapters all focus on agency, but from different perspectives. Some of the contributions present long-term perspectives (Manger, Pelt, Naborczyk) and are thereby able to identify the specific elements at work in memory cultures and how they work over time. In the chapters on contemporary politics, men in power navigate to find a suitable past (Orange and Petersson, Giannotta). Another shared focus is to identify

how national tools and symbols are reused and transformed (Naguib, Pelt). The varying scale of the studies becomes apparent with the two chapters on minority communities (Naborczyk, Tsagarousianou), where the construction of collective memory is essential when conceptualizing belonging, past and present. Artistic production (Raudvere) is yet another way of using the past not only to define identities, but to communicate experiences across borders—cultural, linguistic and political.

One of the aims of this collection is to bring together new perspectives on collective memory in the modern Muslim world. As this volume is entirely based on previously unpublished cases with a certain emphasis on Muslim life outside the Arab world, it indicates connections and intersections, and transnational flow (Naguib, Manger, Pelt). The volume contributes to a conceptualization of the Muslim world at large as dynamic in its cultural production and inclusive of perspectives on modernity that extend well back into the nineteenth century.

Instead of imposing pre-existing definitions of memory and history cultures, the authors were encouraged to develop in-depth cases about memory practices and how these are embedded and mobilized in local history. This diversity has been a strategic choice for this project and inherent in its inception. In this way, the volume reaches out for further interdisciplinary discussion among historians and anthropologists, political scientists and scholars of religion.

Previous memory studies focusing on the Middle East, an important source of inspiration to several of the chapters, have dealt with political uses of the past and in one way or the other been connected to structural modernization processes (Özyürek 2006, 2007; Sa'di and Abu-Lughod 2007; Haugbølle 2010), often with a focus on national memory and the frameworks of ethnic identity. In too many other studies, Muslims stand out as victims or, in the best case, consumers of modernity. This volume poses new questions and presents new kinds of materials in the search for policy-making and politics in practice by providing a longer time frame, a variety of actors studied and a focus on consumption and transmission of memory (and not only on the process of memory construction) while keeping a eye open for diversity in the modes of expression. The chapters emphasize Muslims as active actors in the process of formulating historical narratives. As the name of the series implies, there is a joint focus on contextualized agency rather than “Islam” as a homogenous entity.

This volume brings together a broad spectrum of profoundly interdisciplinary studies characterized by the diversity of cases included and the ways

they are handled. In that sense, it could be compared to the recent wave of studies of nostalgia in the post-Soviet period that have challenged many conventional classifications/boundaries after the Cold War (Boym 2001; Volčič 2007; Zimmermann 2012), though the studies on Southeastern Europe rarely deal with the Muslim populations in the region.

The differences of emphasis and approach that characterize the chapters are nonetheless instructive. The term memory can be seen as shorthand for multitude of modes of engagement with the past—its construction, narration and internalization. In addition, the past that these practices constitute is not uniform but multi-layered and multi-textured. On some occasions, its significance can be attributed to its ‘mythical’ qualities, to its rootedness in time immemorial; on others, in more recent (not seldom traumatic) events. In all cases, memory draws validity from its embeddedness in contemporary practices, from its literal ‘embodiment’. What is more, memory may refer to many different modalities of making sense of the past. From the passivity of inculcation of histories and dominant narratives to the active processes of remembering and the construction of counter-memories, different agents engage in struggles over what is to be remembered and how these memories are to be conceptualized: ethnic groups, religious communities, social strata participate in these processes, which involve different social loci and different levels of social practices.

The chapters move between official history and local history, history in party politics and individual experience. The broad scope promotes broader choices of sources: from everyday life (Naguib, Naborczyk), autobiographies (Pelt), novels and fiction (Raudvere) to global geopolitics (Orange and Petersson, Manger). Several of the chapters are focused on boundaries and persons crossing borders (Manger, Pelt, Naguib, Raudvere) in order to contest stereotypic assumptions about borders in Islamic studies or the study of Islam through emphasizing status groups, economic classes, education and social stratification. Agency is here not limited to local studies, but it constitutes a theoretical nexus between political science and anthropology, history and the history of ideas. It is this diversity, inherent in the concept and the practice of memory, that this book seeks to bring forward to the attention of its readers. The transmission of memory is emphasized in all the chapters, as is the transnational character of the lives of many of the individuals and groups studied, in the hope of contributing to the visibility of Muslim history-writing and diversity, and countervailing any homogenization of Islam and its followers.

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The Flag and the Street: An Ethnographic Study of Egypt's Tentative Moments in 2011

Nefissa Naguib

In the spring of the 1919 revolution, the three main religious communities of Cairo—Jewish, Christian, and Muslim—took to the streets of the capital. Singing nationalist songs and carrying the Egyptian flag, they celebrated the release of the exiled Egyptian nationalist Sa'd Zaghlul.¹

A century later, in a new wave of revolution,² the Egyptian flag was again on public display in the streets of Cairo. Enraged, yet non-violent, young urban men and women created spaces in squares, streets and alleys, where Egyptians from all walks of life imagined an alternative nation-state—'the new Egypt'.³ This essay is about relationship among the flag, the revolution and the felt relevance of the past to the present. It is an attempt to think about the cultural reproduction of the iconography of a nation. One part of this challenge concerns how humans make sense of a powerful historic moment; how we create personal and national identities at moments of emergency that define our understanding of the present, as well as forms of connections, intimacies and emotions that describe our identification and understanding of national and cultural possessions; and how we adapt, resist or transform our lives.

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Flags are entities of vast national identifications and symbolisms. When nation-states make war in the name of national sovereignty, they routinely demand sacrifices so that a familiar way of life will continue and not be consigned to history. In the turmoil of such conflicts, it is difficult if not impossible to step away from the immediacy of the moment and reflect upon what in the flag is being defended. Are we talking about abstract values such as freedom and democracy, or of concrete realities such as the way people live their daily lives? The answer, it seems, is always a mixture of the two. Abstract concepts do not reveal themselves in abstract ways, but through concrete practices—ways of making and doing things. Identities have their own histories and approaches to transmission. National flags provide, perhaps, the most distinct ‘totems’ of national cohesion and identity. The flag, a transcendent emblem that embodies the ideals and ideologies of the nation, unites diverse individuals in a collective body, links the past with the present, and reaffirms genealogical connections between the present and the past. On the one hand, flags in streets are temples of memory where the past is preserved, understood and regulated. On the other hand, flags, if we draw on Clifford, serve as ‘contact zones’ (1997); they are locations for communication and juxtaposition. Thus, the shared past is made of manifold ‘collected memories’ rather than a single ‘collective one’. Flags in the streets are displays of contradictory interpretations of the past and tensions between the legitimacy of the streets and that of the state. New versions of the ‘shared past’ replace older ones and claim authenticity until, in turn, they are replaced by ‘other’ versions of history.

As fragile as it is pervasive, the flag reveals some of the most basic ways that people think about and identify with the nation-state. During the 2011 revolution the flag emerged as a fracturing force taken away with passion and hope from the ‘ruling order’ and ‘down’ to the streets and squares. The flag took a historic turn and drew attention to the streets and potential alternatives for the future. Perhaps what drove hopeful actions at the time can be understood by repeating Benedict Anderson’s thinking on theories of affect, which he says are enfolded and animated by hope ... in the category of ‘not-yet’. (Anderson 2006: 748). An emblem of the nation-state, the flag is the signal of hope in the hands of the revolutionaries: exposed in street battles, waved to commemorate revolutionary martyrs, to celebrate the removal of the president, to protest against unworthy constitutional drafts, it represents anxious economic lives and tenacious hope.

I take this historic turn to provide a new account of the turbulent days which I call ‘Egypt’s tentative moments’. These were days in the

contemporary history of Egypt that generated human solidarity and sharing. Egypt's generous moment reflects a time at which Egyptians changed the idea of transformative possibilities from being 'unchangeable' into 'removable'. In the streets they used 'spring cleaning' colloquially to convey the sense of 'making history': a meaning that resonates with the revolution's also being about a generational struggle and the claim of reconstructing a democratic nation-state—or, as one of the protesters had stencilled on the flag she was waving: 'Sorry for the inconvenience: Rebuilding Egypt'.

What memories and thoughts are generated through an empirical focus on flags? It's a jumble of things and abstractions, the ways in which the flag operates in relation to memory and cultural thinking. It sums up individual expressions and participations in an emotionally powerful way. The flag is dramatized for all to see. There are the aesthetics of the revolution, in addition to actions, objects and events, that project not only opposition, but also a certain view of and attachment to the nation. This is not to say that nothing analytical can be said about the flag in the streets of Egypt beyond the fact that it became a personal object catalyzing feelings, recollections and actions. Flags, we can speculate, might also be a nationalizing object for memory and counter-memory practices.

STREET VALUE

On a midtown Cairo pavement, just down the street from the Cairo Museum—an extremely 'colonial' space, incidentally—a merchant from the Delta sells flags. He owns a shop in his village, but since 'the revolution', he has settled down in Cairo. 'All Egyptians', he tells me, have been busy buying flags. Lately, he has expanded his space and flag merchandise to include hats and T-shirts with images of the flag. Shoppers stop to tell him that his items remind them of 'how it was', and how nice to see 'flags in the street'; it gives the city a festive atmosphere. He is happy with his space, and the police cannot threaten him anymore. He thinks that because he is selling flags, 'they can't just throw my flags on the ground'. He also likes the idea of standing not far from the museum that houses some of Egypt's historic heritage: 'O, our flag is also heritage', he laughs, adding, 'in some years my pieces will be put in a museum'. Shoppers stop. They seem to be more interested in our chat than in purchasing flags. He invites them into the conversation. We are many now discussing and remembering 'the days of the revolution'. I mention something

about how unusual it is to see Egyptian families walking around waving a flag, or small children having the flag painted on their foreheads. Each one has a personal journey to recount, and I detect an overwhelming sense of patriotism. During a break in the stories, a lady who had been standing there for long while turns to me, unprompted, and tells me the following story:

I am a schoolteacher in the suburbs of Cairo. I teach history and Arabic. I am passionate about the subjects I teach. For me they are the pillars of Egyptian education. Outside my school there was a flag, faded and practically in pieces. Nobody cared. In the classroom there was also a huge flag glued on a wall facing the window. The sun had faded the colours; you would not know it's a flag. No one in the class noticed. Then the revolution started. In the beginning we did not speak about it. We continued as if nothing was happening in the country. Then I noticed flags glued on some schoolbags, some students had it painted on their cheek or forehead. The girls had ribbons attached to their hijab. Some boys spray-painted the flag on their jackets and jeans. We got orders to close the school until the situation settled down. Before leaving that day, a group of boys and girls went to the wall with the faded flag and taped up a new one. Outside, another group took down the torn flag and raised a new one. Until that moment, I had been afraid of telling them that I agreed 100 per cent with the revolutionaries. Seeing them so alive and responsible, putting the flag everywhere, I was so proud of 'my children' for being 'true Egyptians'. The story has a number of interesting elements, including the positive community relationships established through the flag, the vividness of the description of events and the affirmation, in this case, that the flag of the nation-state is the flag for revolutionaries and 'true Egyptians'.

More shoppers stop. The merchant's flair for display reveals a sense of style. He uses several tables. The table to the left features assorted piles of glossy flag prints. T-shirts are at the far end of the table. Next to them, at the centre of his display, he has arranged key rings, bracelets, necklaces, wristbands and car accessories with flag images. A very large smudged flag hangs behind him. A saddle hangs next to the flag—'the trophy'—that recalls the 'horrible night' when the previous regime hired camel and horse jockeys to attack the protesters in Tahrir Square. He was not there that day, but a friend told him about it and how the revolutionaries 'from all over Egypt and all classes' were chanting, 'Tahrir is ours, the country is ours, the flag is ours.' He points to the flag hanging next to the saddle: 'both testimonies of our revolution'.

Such narratives of mass production, commercialization and affection for the flag and human solidarity dovetail with other stories about how people were more neighbourly and no one was treated as a stranger. These narratives are highly nostalgic and tend to be told in the imperfect tense ('we used to ...'). Recollections include community values that many people feel had otherwise disappeared under the previous regime. Tahrir, close to the barricades, became the ultimate space, the focal point, of politics, social activity, commensality and artistic manifestations (Naguib 2011). This 'generous moment', in the most basic sense of the term, was fragmentary and evanescent, but it opened up engendered energetic performances about being Egyptian. Vitality and drama—political and social—played out fully; and using the flag created a sense of outreach, human connections and national identification. What also interests me is the implication that there is a category of conflicting memories rooted in likenesses of symbol, such as the flag, that can give rise to strategies of creating histories and constructing huge differences and hostilities. For my purpose, a key text is Simon Harrison's *Fracturing Resemblances* (2006), in which he describes what he calls *mimetic conflict*, involving the nature of social identities whose outward symbols or markers are considered as property, and which may therefore also be disputed property. He argues that competition and violence emerge in conditions of commonality and identification when existing resemblances and mimeses are ideologically disguised and denied: 'Paradoxically, it is what groups have in common that create the conditions that make distinctions between them necessary—indeed, that make them possible' (2006: 13). The national flag becomes a marker that emphasizes the differences and undoes the resemblances within the nation-state. I am suggesting that differences and breaks are most adequately understood as emerging through a process in which the flag, as a device of shared national features of identity, reappears with cultural performances and narratives of disavowing and forgetting 'the old regime'.

MAKING HISTORY

Taking and making the flag public bring forth the materiality of a signifying practice. It is an interplay of image and the body, the people and the state, symbol and sentiment. I am concerned with memories that are displayed by the flag, which, with its rich symbolism and political connotations, points to the myriad articulations—of temporality, memory, personal aspirations and political processes—that are manifested in subjective dispositions to

the past, and in the imagination of possible futures. A historical condition produced distinct cultural formations and collective representations. Rearticulating nationalism by mimetic productions of the state, the flag subjectifies and identifies fragile conditions when history is being remade, with the support of performative dimensions of being ‘true Egyptians’. Under the fragile conditions of creating a democracy, a sense of citizenship is created through retellings of narratives about a recollected immediate past. There is a complicated procedure by which persons negotiate their various levels of relationships with the nation (Bhabha 1990). Bhabha looks into human tendencies to draw on narratives in the construction of the nation; by doing so, ‘plots’ are created and boundaries are identified and drawn up.

Like other national monuments, the flag has fixed dimensions, form and protocol. The Egyptian flag is made up of three equal horizontal bands: red that represents struggle, on the top; white, the bright future, in the middle; and black, oppression, at the bottom. In the middle of the white band is a gold eagle. The colours derive from the Arab liberation flag, and the eagle bears a shield with the word ‘Egypt’. Flags rarely feature at private and personal events. Instead, they adorn government and media buildings, hotels, and official cars. Unlike homes in Norway, where I live, private houses in Egypt do not have flagpoles. Like national museums, flags are projected as inventions expressing linear and irreversible conceptions of identity, time and history. Taken to identify with the revolutionaries demanding ‘removal’ and change, the image raises questions about the pitfalls of cultural hegemony, and probes the dialectical relationship between ‘the streets’ and the nation.

Both Benedict Anderson (2006) and Ernest Gellner (1983) have argued that the concept of nation is an imagined realm constructed by various historical conjunctures. It is grounded in the idea of belonging, defined by territory, language, ethnicity and religion (Anderson 1983; Gellner 1983). These authors do not, as Manuel Castells points out, take into account the weight of shared experiences, or, to use Arjun Appadurai’s terminology, the significance of a ‘shared past’, which developed from ‘a shared history and a shared project, and their historical narratives build on an experience, socially, ethnically, territorially and ‘genderly’ diversified’, but common to the people of the same nation-state (Castells 1998: 29f.; Appadurai 1981). Thus, the shared past is made of manifold ‘collected memories’ rather than one collective memory. There are contradictory interpretations of the past, and tensions between competing interest groups. New versions

of the 'shared past' may for various reasons become official, replace older ones, and claim authenticity until they, in turn, are replaced by other 'official' versions of history. Hence, the grand narrative of the nation-state is regularly challenged by differing versions. Nevertheless, regardless of fluctuating power relationships, protests and demonstrations provide crucial insights into the powers and processes that shape national identity and collected memories. The ways opposition is voiced or silenced may both reflect and affect existing perceptions of identities within the nation-state.

The flag exposes the challenge of how to reconcile *flags in the streets* and the state's un-waved flag, when they are one and the same object. It is not only that this opens up potentialities and possibilities, but also that perceptions are formed by the times in which people live. Perceptions of time and transformations, or, as in this case, of revolutions, are connected to humans' understanding of themselves as subjects and agents of history, and how we think, feel and react to transformations. This makes me think again about the workings of memory, in particular the politics of memory. The flag, as I use it here, functions as a verification and manifestation of imaginings of a new Egypt. It is imbued with testimonies infused with national and human details, individual experiences and shared historical consciousness. The historical consciousness found in the flag involves 'ordinary' experiences of retellings, which are selected, expressed and sheltered by the persons who use them. Historical consciousness contains recollections that are kept alive because they are simply salient moments. Protesters with flags are mostly unknown to one another, yet at some level they form part of the same story. The politics of memory is instructive, because it says that any memory responds to intentions which are usually political ambitions of states. However, aspirations can also come from below. We are talking about a balance of power. Memory is an object of these forces. Intentionality drives memory and its presence in public spaces. These spaces—streets and squares—where the flag transcends are dynamic, like history and memory. The geography of the flag reshapes the streets and the nation, as it were. Spaces are socially constructed, constituting value-laden, lived daily experiences in which social action is represented in action and flag.

The flag in Egyptian revolutionary hands is a tool that illustrates the human capacity to relate to and rework historical pasts. The alliances between very different individuals united in their demands and the flag provided forms of national tractions in people's minds. What gives them hope, as opposed to past patterns of politics, is that this unstructured performance

of citizenship comes out of collective sociality, in contrast to previous hierarchies of political structuring, representation and control. The flag in Egypt's 'generous moment' provides a form of politics in which individuals represented themselves and shared convictions of nationhood with others.

In his book *Régimes d'historicité* (2003), François Hartog notes that we live in an era in which the heritage wave has assumed such proportions that it has reached what he calls '*le tout-patrimoine*', meaning that almost everything becomes part of a common heritage. This inflation of heritage display in daily life signifies the rationale of the multiple, polyvalent and publicized shared heritage that includes the tangible and intangible heritage of the populace. Taking the flag to the revolution was significant in publicizing what Carl Duncan has called a 'ritual of citizenship', in the sense of mobilizing and stimulating a sense of belongingness to the nation-state (Duncan 1991: 88). Although flags are used by nation-states to represent themselves to themselves, my interest is not in trying to define the nature of the flag, but rather in understanding what it displays with regard to episodes in history and memory, with regard to images at turning points in the progress of the nation-state.

Displays of flags in the midst of anti-structural protests can serve to disrupt structures of the immediate past. Taking the flag into the epicentres of the revolt against the ruling order generates intense feelings of togetherness, sharing, attentiveness and attachments to the nation. Like the ritual symbols described by Turner (1969), flags, symbolizing modern nation-states, have both an emotional and an instrumental aspect in their range of meaning. The emotional aspect connects persons to an intangible collective entity, an emblematic kin assortment. The instrumental aspect may be one of politics or economy, intended to mobilize for conflict or peace. Flags—as objects, or rather images, of unity—nonetheless nearly always have disruptive capacities both within the group and outwards. This is clearly the case in Egypt.

The flag, a potent image by which the state projects itself to itself and the world, became a powerful indicator of the people's break with the state. Moreover, it became an image for personal and collective remembrances as well as counter-memory and demotion of the nation's past. This harvesting of new forms of intimacies between people and between citizens and the nation suggests taking an approach which follows the connections, emotions and politics that flags can generate. Just as Appadurai (1986) suggests, we might study the 'social life of things'. The flag may be followed through its various entanglements across

boundaries that are legal, political and moral—within and beyond nation-states, persons, communities and affiliations.

In my attempt to analyse how public performances and displays were an important part of the complex cultural landscape of the Egyptian revolutionary processes, I find James Clifford's ideas about culture constructive. Cultures are incomplete, time-specific formations that are learned and constantly in a state of fluctuation. The Egyptian popular uprising was a living drama whose political success depended on the cultural power of the people who played out its ability to project powerful symbols and real-time performances; to stimulate and circulate powerful emotions; to organize exemplary solidarity; to create suspense; and finally, to inflict an ignominious defeat on dark and polluted adversaries while purifying the nation through a stunning victory that gave citizens new hope and glory. The flag became an important communication site, intimately connected with demands for the removal of the regime and, later, anti-military protests.

FLAG POLITICS

We use memory to establish who we are, that is, as a form of testimony about ourselves which we occasionally put on display. Memory can be a dramatic device with urgent import regarding how we deal with our past and present, and what we think of as our potential future. Our memories exert a powerful influence on our subjectivities and our behaviour. They also structure the form and expression of our manifestations in life as we live it. Such memory is captured by governmentality (Foucault 1991), which refers to the emergence of a concern for the governance of a complex of 'men and women' through a range of techniques of knowing about populations via statistical surveys and demography and for managing populations through such knowledge. We might be able to trace how the flag mediates relations between the state and the individual, or between the nation and its recollections. Most importantly, an argument can be made about how governmentality in relation to the flag involves the socialization of individuals as good citizens and thus involves the construction of ethical subjects. The case from Egypt is an example or illustration of how these relations can take many different forms. Another set of issues relevant to flags and memory is captured by recent emphasis on institutional reflexivity (Giddens 1991), risk society (Beck 1992) and related concerns such as radical doubt, uncertainty and lack of trust. These issues transcend the physical boundaries between people, flags and their usage,

and are sensitive to shifting configurations of jeopardy and trust. What is involved in taking the flag is often imagined about a past. Consequently, changing configurations in the relation between the state and its citizens express uncertainty and the flag and threat.

Any understanding of memory, I think, must link its powerful effects on individuals to broader circulations and configurations of recollections within the nation, localities and polities, and to the way we displace memory and attach it to a thing—in this case the flag. Memory is a storehouse that brings to mind both personal and relational constructions. Taking ownership of the flag involves historical repertoires that comprise both collective and private memories. I make the distinction between individual and collective memory. Only individuals remember, but societies organize these memories or, indeed, other representations of the past into collective scenarios of themselves. The function of collective memory is to establish individual memories of the past. What is important in those collective scenarios is how we establish some kind of relationship and identification with the past (Naguib 2008). Ultimately, watching and talking to protesters with flags during the uprisings, and later having conversations with individuals like the merchant and the teacher, tell us less about the finer details of the revolution and the nation's future than about the meaning of these flags in people's lives, and about being 'true' Egyptians. These flags reveal only certain aspects of time and place; but they are symbols that attach their owners' pasts to their present life and emotions. We find in flags a place to which memory connects objects that Pierre Nora (1984) calls '*lieux de mémoire*'. The significance of the Egyptian flag lies not only in its capacity to function as an observable artefact of people's painful pasts, but also in its capacity to recapture and maintain memories of significant moments in their lives.

Looking at and reflecting on the flag with the merchant, shoppers and the teacher in Cairo, I could see that assortments of flag trinkets prompted associations and stimulated recognition of a shared moment in their lives, summoning the immediate past with its power to evoke more individual memories and stories. Constructions of memory are also about the ways in which processes of remembering depend on the possibilities of 'disremembering'. This is not the same as saying that forgetting is somehow retaining information; rather, it is an incorporated aspect of remembering or sorting out the past. Or as Elizabeth Tonkin puts it, 'People talk of the "past" so as to distinguish "now" from a different "then"' (1995: 9); and she is not categorical as to whether it is memory or history. Her main objective is to

understand individual stories as social interactions. A fruitful outcome of her approach is that she listens carefully to the person telling the story. She makes a note of the location and includes temporality: ‘The representations of pastness that these interconnections involve include the occasion, when teller and listener intersect at a point in time and space, as well as the times recounted’ (1995: 9). Tonkin is telling us that narration only exists within social relationships, and can only be articulated through them.

A more image-orientated approach than Tonkin’s takes us back to Roland Barthes, who wrote something to this effect about photography (1981): Photography records what we cannot record existentially. When engaging with a photograph, one can never deny that what it reveals was actually there. Following his lead regarding the way that images of the national flag relate to individual pasts, we can argue with Barthes that, like photography, the flag does not necessarily say ‘what is no longer’, but only, and for certain, ‘what has been’. I want to quickly add what I think the reader already realizes: that this essay is not concerned with the objective truth that flags signify, but with the subjective truth of private ‘workings of memory’, individuals’ ‘postmemory’ (Hirsch 1997) and the experiences and veneration of visions from a significant ‘generous moment’.

If we take the image of the flag and its relationship with the past of the nation-state further, then Jan Assmann’s statement (2002: 8) that meanings in present references do not lie with ‘actual history’ comes to mind. Rather, he finds meanings in the narratives that have been constructed by the people (in his case, also Egyptians) to account for the traces, messages and memories they have inherited from the past. Traces are actual archaeological remains—human bones and ruins of houses—while messages are the ‘symbolical signs’: the meanings invested by contemporaries in political moments and condensed into inscriptions or images. The task is to decode messages according to contemporary possibilities. The units of Assmann’s third historical category, memories, are defined as myths, which reveal how the past is remembered at any given point in time. As such, memories are kept alive as long as those who ‘knew’ the events are still there to maintain those moments out there in society. His categories of evidence are useful for the visualization of relationships among moments in history, the flag and personal memories, recalling people’s interpretations, their emotions and reflections on rebuilding the nation-state.

One obvious constraint on the use of recollections is that stories are based on remembering and forgetting. A possible reason for this is the irregularity and fragility of human memory and the obligation to edit

the disorder of human life. Using flags as narratives of the nation-state is rather awkward, despite their significance, because they are image stories. Dialogues and remarks are carelessly conveyed regarding the flag, yet it is precisely this method that contains the spirit and gives vitality to flags as significant stimuli to memory. Motivated by Ricoeur (1984), my approach to personal narratives and performances of experiences is twofold: that they are fundamental as instructions in human experiences through time, and basically also because they provide our only means of increasing the volume of individual evocative memories of citizenship. One layer of meaning in the national flag as a stimulus of memory is to provide the immediate context: the form in which the flag is presented and the use to which it is put, for example, to tell the story of taking back the country.

The merchant's flags and my conversations with the merchant, shoppers and the teacher reflect personal and also national identity and the role of memory, amnesia and history. Recollections try out the myriad ways in which memory, personal biography and critical historical moments are manifested in subjective disposition to the past, and in the imagination of possible futures. Memory is also a political agent of precarious lives. That is, memories are not merely stocked-up images sourced from the brain on appropriate occasions, but are very much formed as dynamic dealings between past and the present. To quote Lambek and Antze, 'Identity is not composed of a fixed set of memories but lies in the dialectical, ceaseless activity of remembering and forgetting, assimilating and discarding' (1998: xxix).

We are here also in the realm of Halbwachs's collective memory. Memory and society were his central issue; his argument is against considering memory an exclusively individual faculty. To remember is to be attached to collective orientations that allow memories to be synchronized in both time and space. Not only are memories obtained through society; they are recounted, recognized and located socially (1980). Cherished flags convey visions that both diverge and belong to a point of reference; to remember, we need to recognize and understand particular relations, to know and to a certain extent share references. The distinction between history and memory is also made by Pierre Nora, for whom 'sites' of memory are 'any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community' (Nora and Kritzman 1996: xvii). Consequently, flags in the hands of a revolutionary, on a merchant's shop-counter or displayed in a classroom wall are

concrete sites 'where memory crystallizes'. Nora makes a slightly different comparison than Halbwachs: he looks at the difference between artificial history and true memory, maintaining that, by its very nature, memory is living, while history is not only constructed but also reconstructed. Nora is clearer than Halbwachs regarding the question of memory as 'being in the world'—that is, the way in which everyday memory is created between individuals and sentimental attachments.

CONCLUSIONS

Human performances with flags are by their very nature inclined to be particular and arbitrarily associative, in contrast to representations that may be felt more collectively. Such emotional affects involve both meanings and feelings stitched together by time and place. Watching the maze of flags during the 18 days of the revolution and later in the streets of Cairo, one's emotions are not always explicitly articulated; they are best felt in Rosaldo's statement 'with reference to the cultural scenarios and associations it evokes' (1980: 142). Emotions marked by trauma are both portrayed and evoked by anecdotes or statements contained in the realization that past moments are times which are painfully lost. Obviously, my use of the term 'evokes' is an attempt to describe an affect and not to recommend an analysis.

At a mundane level we have displays of flags in everyday worlds, and the merchant and teacher 'enjoy' a sense of the past; but the flag, whether cloth or in trinket form, evokes a deep feeling of communal attachments to a powerful shared story or to the removal and reconstruction of a nation-state. For those of us concerned with oral testimonies and personal autobiographical memories, a national flag serves both as an access point to major historical issues and personal memories, and as an aid to the verification of both, providing an image of the actual past. Perhaps the very notion of the flag as a visualization of the revolution somehow obviates our need for detailed explanations. Certainly, the impact of the national flag on people's personal experiences of the revolution involves more than this. Raised on flag poles outside official buildings, the Egyptian flag is revered but frozen, cut off from private lives. With the arrival of the people's uprising, the flag represented the revolution and demands for the removal of the previous order.

In this essay I have been concerned with flags as objects and images that evoke the recent popular revolution in Egypt. I explain this use of the flag

in recalling the moment at which the national flag, once the symbol of the ruling order, became a ‘performance’ of the new Egypt. manifested the reconstruction of the nation-state as an activity—a ‘performance’ of being Egypt. Even if flags are indeed only fragments, reproducing fractions of seconds of the world, they are still good storytellers; they fill in the gaps and explain tangible attachments to the nation. Accounts of the revolution also depend on memory—the relationship among images, absent moments and the felt relevance between the past and ‘being in the revolution’. Once we open ourselves to these complexities, we will find that what appears to be simply the waving of flags also turns out to be a far deeper act that reaches back into the past and also signals a hoped-for future.

NOTES

1. Ziad Fahmy 2011 *Ordinary Egyptians: Creating the Modern Nation through Popular Culture, 1870–1919*. Cairo: The American University of Cairo Press, pp.140–141.
2. I use ‘revolution’ because it is the literal translation of the Arabic word *thawra*, which Egyptians use to describe the ongoing transformations.
3. Nefissa Naguib 2011 “Basic Ethnography at the Barricades”, in *IJMES* 43, p. 383.

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‘There Can Be No Other Sun in the Sky’: Political Myth, Spirituality and Legitimacy in Contemporary Kazakhstan

Mia Orange and Bo Petersson

With the elimination of Soviet state communism in the early 1990s, the ideational foundation of politics in the five Central Asian former Soviet republics had to undergo fundamental rebuilding. Instead of the defunct basis of Soviet-style Marxism–Leninism, the rulers of the suddenly independent Central Asian states urgently had to identify other ways and means of legitimizing their hold on power. The following is an analysis of how this quest has fared in the case of Kazakhstan, a resource-rich state with regional great-power aspirations. These aspirations are shared with neighbouring Uzbekistan, which, however, had a more dramatic period of introduction to post-Soviet independent statehood, characterized by stern authoritarian rule, domestic riots, and occasional bouts of militant and oppositional Islamism (Adams 2010). Even if Kazakhstan certainly has not been devoid of problems on its road to sustained independence, it is interesting to try to analyse the reasons for the more tranquil developments in that country during the first two and a half decades of its statehood.

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Several attempts at locating the ideational driving forces behind contemporary Kazakhstani politics have focused on neo-patrimonialism, clan politics and personal networks (Collins 2006; Schatz 2004; Murphy 2006; Franke et al. 2009; Isaacs 2010), which have been argued to partly fill the ideational vacuum left behind by the demise of Soviet communism. Subscribing to a slightly different theoretical genre, however, we believe that the perspective of political myth adds valuable understanding to the political dynamics of the newly independent post-communist and post-Soviet states in Central Asia. This is in line with and adds to previous scholarship focused on nation-building efforts of Central Asian political elites (Akbarzadeh 1996, 1999; Akiner 1995, 1997; Roy 2000). Kazakhstan is a young state, and we believe that political myth plays a crucial role in shaping and establishing common perceptions and values in relation to statehood and national identity (Cummings 2006; Mellon 2010). What makes political myth particularly relevant in this context is that it aspires to signify broad social consensus; it contains widely held and taken-for-granted truths which are more often than not sanctioned, if not created, by those in power, as well as lived by and adhered to by the electorate (Petersson 2014; Bottici and Challand 2014).

The construction of new national symbols and the preservation and recreation of old ones is prominent in contemporary narratives of nationhood in Kazakhstan. More generally, the representation of political myth is to a significant extent made through language and visual imagery. Research on such phenomena thus needs to use a methodological approach that takes symbols, imagery and other artefacts into account (Bottici and Challand 2014: 7). Place observation has accordingly been undertaken by the authors. In the process, visual readings have been made of newly erected monuments in the new capital city of Astana, in the former capital of Almaty, and other significant sites.

However, the main source of information has been a series of interviews conducted with elite politicians and political analysts in Kazakhstan during field trips undertaken in 2010–2011.¹ The interviewees were chosen because of their position, either as top officials within the ruling party or other parties, or due to their recognized knowledge of nation-building and current political processes in Kazakhstan. Finally, we have also analysed a number of key official statements and public speeches by Kazakhstan's incumbent and perennial president, Nursultan Nazarbayev.

At independence in 1992 the titular people, the Kazakhs,² were not in a majority in Kazakhstan. However, during the 1990s a large number of

Kazakhstanis of Russian descent migrated to Russia. Some other nationalities also decreased significantly in numbers due to migration. For example, many Germans moved to Germany during the years following independence (Pohl 2008). As of 2009 the Kazakhs composed, according to estimates, 63.1 per cent of the population, whereas Russians made up 23.7 per cent, and Uzbeks, Ukrainians, Uighurs, Tatars, Germans and others accounted for the remaining 13.2 per cent (The World Factbook 2015). In all, there are more than 140 ethnic groups in Kazakhstan (Jones 2010), which makes it almost as heterogeneous as the Russian Federation, and indeed the former Soviet Union in its day.

Kazakhstan had a history of being a borderless land in the pre-Russian era, throughout the Russian Empire and during the Soviet period. Its current international borders are a Soviet construct, bearing little historical significance. Politically and economically, Kazakhstan is highly influenced by its powerful neighbours. Bordering China to the east and Russia to the north and impacted as well by Turkey and the West, it is unclear where the young nation should look for a sense of cohesive national identity and statehood.

Kazakhstan is also religiously diverse. Although Islam is the stated religion of most Kazakhs, Orthodox Christianity is followed by a significant number of people. Other major religions are also represented, among them Judaism.

Due to the variety of influences, it was far from self-evident whether the young, independent state of Kazakhstan would seek a national identity constructed on religious and political precepts of Islam or the collective memory of its titular people; that is, the Kazakhs. As this paper will show, the ruling cadre of Kazakhstan has been treading the path of political mythmaking carefully—there are ongoing processes that are sometimes contradictory. On the one hand, there is celebration of ethnic diversity and religious plurality; on the other hand, the young state seeks to lead society away from Russian and past Soviet influence through the promotion of Kazakh language over Russian, and by imbuing Kazakh myths, spirituality, religion and folklore with political significance.

In addition to this introduction, this chapter consists of six sections. In the first, the theoretical perspective of political myth is introduced. In the second, Islam in Kazakhstan is explored. The third section recounts the specific myths of ethnic and religious plurality articulated after independence. Here, the long-dominant endeavour to keep Kazakhstan stable in terms of ethnic relations is discussed at some length. In the fourth section, ‘Kazakhization’

of state and society is analysed—how new and old elites of Kazakhstan strive to differentiate and distance history and culture from Russia. The fifth section is devoted to the persona of the president Nursultan Nazarbayev himself, and how a significant part of national mythmaking builds on him personally as a political strongman. In the sixth and final section, our general conclusions are summarized, whereby we come back to the absolute centrality of the president for political mythmaking in contemporary Kazakhstan.

POLITICAL MYTH

For a couple of decades there has been considerable interest within the social sciences and humanities in different forms of collective identity and in the processes that serve to weld people together in their striving towards common goals. Most prominently, such processes have taken place within ideological frameworks of nationalism or religion; and looking into the beliefs that bring and keep people together in abstract, imagined communities of different kinds remains a vital field of inquiry. This is where the perspective of political myth comes in. A myth is, according to Boer (2009: 9), an important story. It is a story that consequently makes a difference for people, and, in its most effective form, prompts them to act on behalf of certain ideals and in certain ways. More specifically, political myths can be understood as shared beliefs about the common past and its relation to the present and the future of a society (Bar-Tal 2000; Cohen 1999). They provide a common meta-narrative into which people can fit their own life paths and find a rationale for their own decisive choices of action (Cohen 1999; Bottici and Challand 2014). On a collective level they grant ‘significance to the political conditions and experiences of a social group’ (Bottici and Challand 2014: 92).

In contrast to the everyday usage of the term ‘myth’, the actual truth claims of a political myth are not relevant for determining its impact (Bottici 2010; Blustein 2008). Instead, what is most important is that the myth has broad popular appeal; that it is actually acted on as if it were true; that it provides a sense of origin, identity and purpose to its believers; and not least that it confers legitimacy on political leaders who successfully claim to act in accordance with the myth (Petersson 2014). Whereas political myths play major roles for promoting intra-group cohesion, they by the same token provide a rationale for the exclusion of groups and individuals deemed not to fit in with the basic plot offered by the myth. Paraphrasing Hylland Eriksen (2004), political myths work much

like inverted refrigerators, spreading warmth on the inside and projecting cold to the outside. To put it differently, political myths therefore comprise much of the web from which narratives of nationalism and other collective—isms are woven. This goes for the 'hot' and conflict-seeking articulations in situations of acute antagonism and tension, as well as for the 'banal' and seemingly undramatic versions of -isms, which affect thinking, discourse and action in mundane, everyday situations (Billig 1995; Petersson 2006, 2009).

As mentioned above, political myths are by their very nature supported by the powers that be, as they, if successful, lend legitimacy to them and to the main directions of the policies that they wish to pursue (McDonald 2010; Bottici and Challand 2014). The authorities will therefore attempt and inspire the inscription of the myths into political practice, rituals and institutions in everyday public life (della Sala 2010). They will, using the seminal term launched by Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983), purport to 'invent traditions' and inscribe them into everyday politics. If successfully constructed, inscribed and sustained, the contents of the myths will be treated as common sense (Kulyk 2006), and will thus largely become shielded from critical scrutiny. At this stage, the process of further entrenchment of the myths in public and private life becomes autonomous and self-reinforcing. The myth becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy (Bottici and Challand 2014: 8).

However, in all societies there is a degree of tension between the aspirations for power and legitimacy underlying the construction of myth from the top, on the one hand, and potentially subversive counterclaims from below, on the other. Describing this, Duncan Bell uses the concept of *mythscape*, which he defines as the 'temporally and spatially extended discursive realm wherein the struggle for control of peoples' memories and the formation of nationalist myths is debated, contested and subverted' (Bell 2003: 66). Both the myths constructed and nurtured from above and the potentially divergent counterclaims on the part of the public and by contending elites compete for attention in the *mythscape* (Persson and Petersson 2014). Successful political myths may be hegemonic and influential, but they are never without potential challengers, should their vehicles of legitimization start to fail.

We argue that the concept of *mythscape* is of central importance for the understanding of politics in any society, contemporary Kazakhstan being no exception. In keeping with this, we will in the following endeavour to show that at this stage of political development the myths propounded by

the powers that be in Kazakhstan stand relatively unopposed by counter-claims from below. However, as shown by political developments in the former Soviet Union, like the colour revolutions in 2003–2005 and the more recent events surrounding the Euro-Maidan in Ukraine starting in 2013, facades may crack quickly. If for some reason previously influential political myths lose their grip on people's minds, rivalling myths may gain ground fast. No doubt the political leaders of Kazakhstan are very aware of this. Even if our field data dates a few years back, the analysis below should be read against this background.

ISLAM IN KAZAKHSTAN

Considering the rapidity with which the ideological, Marxist–Leninist foundation evaporated with the demise of the Soviet state, and also taking into account that there were no previous traditions of statehood to build upon when constructing the new states of Central Asia, it was not an easy task the new leaders had to face when independent statehood practically fell into their laps in the early 1990s. Forging a new ideational basis was necessary to garner enough legitimacy to make the state function, and, probably not least important in the leaders' minds, to secure enough support for their own positions at the helm of the state.

One of the conceivable routes for the Central Asian leaders to take in trying to secure fundamental legitimacy would have been to use Islam as a centrepiece (Roy 2000). As Islamic practices were actively discouraged during the Soviet era, building new national identities on religion would have constituted a decisive and symbolic break with the past. This was also a road initially taken by the five Central Asian leaders at the time. After independence each of them soon embarked on highly publicized pilgrimages to Mecca, and all quickly moved to create their own national organizations for Islamic clergy [muftiyats] (Hann and Pelkmans 2009: 1525).

In view of the Soviet authorities' animosity to religion, it could have been assumed that the number of people who actively identified themselves as religious decreased during the Soviet period. According to surveys conducted in the 1970s—and bearing in mind the notorious unreliability of Soviet-era statistics—this seems to hold true for the ethnic Russian population throughout the Soviet Union. Only 20 per cent identified themselves as Christians, according to the survey. Muslims in Central Asia seemed, however, to deviate from this pattern. In 1970 80 per cent of the native Kazakh and Kyrgyz populations actually identified themselves

as Muslim (Hann and Pelkmans 2009: 1524). Incidentally, the percentage corresponds well to the post-independence numbers. In a study on Muslim identity conducted by R’oi and Wainer in four of the Central Asian republics, almost 100 per cent of the respondents professed to be Muslims (2009: 306). Other studies carried out on the religious identities of Kazakhs show similar results (Aydingün 2007: 79). On the other hand, R’oi and Wainer’s data also indicated that the people of Kazakhstan visited the mosque less, wanted a state religion less and to a lesser extent identified with people in other Muslim countries than did citizens in other Central Asian republics (2009). So, one might ask, how sustainable a basis does Islamic religion actually offer for the construction of post-Soviet national identity in Kazakhstan?

In making sense of their results, it is important to note that R’oi and Wainer’s (2009) article concerned religious practices rather than the cultural symbolism of Islam. Islamic culture and practices, which were upheld throughout the Soviet era, can actually be thought of as a form of resistance to the Soviet authorities. As such, Islam could have a political rather than a purely religious role to play in constructing national identities post-independence. Aydingün argues that Islam in Kazakhstan was conceived as ‘traditional’, and as such was not a part of Soviet discourse, while it has an ‘official’ status today as part of a Kazakh nationalist project (Aydingün 2007: 69f.). The extent to which Islam was in conflict with the Soviet project is, however, contested. Martha Brill Olcott, for example, argues that the authorities were not wholly opposed to the practice of Islam, and that there is little evidence to suggest that Islam was regarded as a political and social problem to the same extent as was Christianity during the Soviet years (Brill Olcott 1982: 488). This would also account for the difference in professed believers between Christians and Muslims mentioned above. Regardless of the state of affairs in the past, Aydingün’s (2007) argument is that it is difficult to distinguish between what is traditionally Kazakh and what is Muslim in contemporary Kazakhstan. The idea that Islam can be perceived as an endemic part of Kazakh identity is not new. One could argue, as Bruce Privratsky (2001: 65) does, that the variety of Islam practiced in Kazakhstan represents Kazakh culture, values and identity in general. It is clearly distinct from Islam as commonly understood, and is as much cultural as spiritual, Privratsky goes on to argue.

Except for a subculture of discriminating modernists, all Kazakh think of themselves as Muslim by birth, and “Muslimness” is believed to be one of the things that make a Kazakh a Kazakh. It is important to the

understanding of religion as Kazakh that Muslim values are believed to be innate: “Muslimness”, via ancestors and saints, has “seeped into our blood” (Privratsky 2001: 239).

The distinction between the cultural and religious practices of Islam is thus not easy to make, since the two universes of signification are deeply intertwined. Myths about the new Kazakh nation, tradition and culture are sometimes connected to Islamic rituals, monuments and practices, but rarely to religious beliefs as such. An example of this is the restoration of religious sites and monuments throughout Kazakhstan. Outside the city of Taraz, there is a mausoleum built in the eleventh or twelfth century in honour of Aisha Bibi, a young noblewoman. Although the site is a Muslim place of worship, the plaque outside it mentions only Kazakh spiritual heritage and history, and says nothing about Islam. The shrine to Aisha Bibi is an example of the symbolic function of Islam in Kazakhstan, where Kazakh culture, history and religion are difficult to differentiate from each other.

The more precise role of Islam and Islamic culture in newly constructed or re-constructed Kazakh political myths is therefore hard to fathom. On the one hand, Ro’i and Wainer’s (2009) survey thus indicates that Islam is less important in Kazakhstan than in other Central Asian states.³ On the other hand, many people argue that there is an innate and general spirituality in the Kazakh myths, culture and literature (Serikzhan Mambetalin 2011; Mukhtar Shanakov 2010; Alikhan Baimenov 2011).

In both Almaty and Astana, new, grand mosques have been built in recent years, signifying a revival of Islam or at least of Islamic buildings. These new religious buildings, which have all been constructed in a modern style, emphasize form more than content of Islamic mythmaking in Kazakhstan. This suggests something different from Soviet practices. The new buildings hold symbolic significance, as they relate to the form of post-Soviet architecture seen elsewhere in Astana, but also in other major Kazakhstani cities. The new mosque in Almaty, which was in part financed by the state, is one of the largest in Central Asia, with room for 10,000 worshippers (Rorlich 2003). Funds were also provided from Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Turkey, who all contributed significantly to the construction (Vertkin 2007: 439). In post-Soviet Kazakhstan, many Kazakhs go to these same countries for their religious education (Rorlich 2003). There is a potential contradiction between relating to Islam as a nation-building project, on the one hand, and seeing it as a joint project with other Islamic states, on the other.

The mosque-building boom thus denotes a break with former practices, and is significant on many levels. The former dearth of mosques in

the land- and cityscapes of Kazakhstan has been described as particular to local religious practices. It also served to make Kazakh Islam resilient to the Soviet state's attempts to quell it (Privratsky 2001: 240f.). As it has been less spatially bounded as a result, traditional forms of Islam in Kazakhstan have instead tended to rely on narratives and myths related to Kazakh national identity and history.

MYTHS OF A MULTI-ETHNIC KAZAKHSTAN

The main exhibition at the Central State Museum in Almaty has not been changed significantly since the 1990s. On the top floor, there is a display representing the various ethnic groups in Kazakhstan. A number of traditional and religious items, and a mannequin wearing folk costume, symbolize each group. There are displays for all large groups, such as the Russians, as well as for smaller ones, such as the Kyrgyz and the Polish. The space allocated for each group is almost the same, regardless of their proportion of the population. However, it is noteworthy that in the museum, there is no reference to the often dark histories which brought the various groups to Kazakhstan in the first place. Hundreds of thousands of Koreans, Germans, Tatars, Chechens and others were deported to Kazakhstan from other parts of the USSR during the Stalin era.

In terms of nation-branding (Kaneva 2011), inter-ethnic concord is a main theme communicated by the present political leadership. The catchword does not, however, tell a comprehensive story about ethnicity in Kazakhstan, nor is its connection to history very clear. Ethnic differences are made visible and are sometimes actually exaggerated, as in the museum; they are presented as static and unchanging, and are thus highly essentialized, yet peaceful relations are also encouraged. These official displays demonstrating the importance of ethnic concord can be perceived as symbolic. Peace and cooperation between ethnic groups are framed as essential to the future prosperity and development of Kazakhstan.

All ethnic groups in contemporary Kazakhstan are represented in a parliamentary assembly, the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan, which was created by President Nazarbayev to facilitate inter-ethnic contact and respect in the newly independent state (Jones 2010). This establishment was also consistent with the major themes nurtured in the president's political discourse. Nazarbayev has as one of his most prominent themes consistently stressed the importance of inter-ethnic stability and peace.

In his speech at the third Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions in 2010, he said:

The Kazakhstan experience of inter-ethnic and interconfessional concord has been recognized as one of the most successful on the post-soviet space [sic] (Nazarbayev 2010).

The president's statement thus not only relates to inter-ethnic peace and stability, but also to religion. Pluralism is officially favoured, and religion, regardless of which, is considered to be a positive force in society. One could say that the political elites stress spirituality rather than Islam as one of the pillars of the state. Nurlan Uteshev, chairman of Zhas Otan, the youth movement of the president's party, puts it like this:

There is spirituality, friendship and unity in everything. Probably, this is... if we talk about ideology... to see what Kazakhstan has become in the past 20 years, all these things carry the meaning of the new ideology (Nurlan Uteshev 2011).

The holding of the third Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions in 2010 was another indication of the active use of political myths supporting the establishment of a multi-ethnic and multi-religious Kazakhstan. Ideas about stability were almost omnipresent in Nazarbayev's inaugural speech at the congress:

When there is no friendship, there prevails hostility. That is why it is necessary to instil eternal qualities such as humanism, charity, spirituality in people (Nazarbayev 2010).

In order to underline the importance of the event, a new conference venue was built for the occasion. It is a giant triangular structure of glass, reminiscent of the Louvre pyramid and designed by Norman Foster, the British architect. Tellingly, the building is called the Palace of Peace and Reconciliation. As made clear by the president's speech, the idea was that the congress, and Kazakhstan's liberal attitude to freedom of religion, would enhance the superior value of stability, which is thus presented as one of the most positive qualities in Kazakhstan.

There are different conceivable alternatives for the elite with regard to how to construct and communicate political myths which appeal to the different ethnic groups in Kazakhstan. The museum in Almaty, as well as the constant reiteration of the concept of stability, actually indicates that

there are differences between the groups, but that inter-ethnic cooperation and stability are possible. As mentioned previously, the reasons for and historical aspects of the ethnic diversity are ignored or glossed over in the museum, as are the darker sides of Kazakhstan’s Soviet past. In fact, many interviewees were reluctant to speak about the legacy of the Stalin era—above all about the millions who died in famines during the collectivization campaign in the early 1930s (Shayakhmetov 2006) and about the fact that whole peoples were deported to Kazakhstan from other parts of the USSR under conditions of unimaginable suffering. There are visible signs of these horrible times on the steppe outside Astana—the ruins of old gulag prison camps can still be seen in the landscape.

Interestingly, there is in the Kazakhstani mythscape some open criticism in relation to how successful the government has been in creating unity, stability and inter-ethnic peace. A journalist at Kaz-Tag, the Kazakhstani news agency, thought the following about the political ambition of creating one Kazakhstani people out of a number of different ethnic and clan groups:

Well, the making of one Soviet people was never accomplished. The communists got halfway, and the president and [the presidential party] Nur Otan have been trying, but they haven’t done it. The meaning of clan has changed a bit: now they are just the people around someone powerful. It’s like a pyramid, the president is on top, and then there are people all the way down. Almost everyone in Kazakhstan is connected this way, but it hasn’t got much to do with relatives anymore. (Rassul Rysambetov 2010).

Unlike the official channels, the journalist, Mr Rysambetov, speaks of Kazakhstan’s Soviet past. Here, the failure of the Soviet Union to establish a single, strong identity is seen in relation to the ambition—by implication equally formidably challenged—of the Kazakhstani state to make clan and ethnic identities less important in politics. Indeed, there are several important similarities between the early Kazakhstani politics of declaring and attaining ethnic concord and the official Soviet-era view on ethnic identity and nationalism. As in Kazakhstan, ethnic identities were essentialized in the Soviet Union. Whether the Kazakhstani attempts at constructing stability and concord risk developing in a similar manner as did inter-ethnic relations in the Soviet Union is, of course, an open question; but glossing over inter-ethnic differences, and indeed conflicts, would seem to be of little avail. By way of comparison, during the 1990s in Russia, the Yeltsin presidential administration made a point of repeatedly stressing the concept of *rossiyane* (Ruslanders) when referring to all citizens of the Russian Federation, instead of using the term *russkie*, which connotes

ethnic Russians (Petersson 2001). The use of the former concept has since then been largely discarded, which might imply that the viability of a corresponding strategy in the case of Kazakhstan may also be questionable.

KAZAKHIZATION

During the early years of independence, the ideal of concord between ethnic groups thus seemed essentially uncontested within the political elite. In more recent years, however, a parallel political myth has come to the fore. This idea can be labelled *Kazakhization*—the promotion of the Kazakh language, culture, history, religion and myths at the expense of those of other ethnic groups (Diener 2002: 637). The same actors who promote the political myths of inter-ethnic peace may at the same time use Kazakh political myths in a more narrow sense. President Nazarbayev's own speeches are good examples of this. In his inauguration speech after being re-elected in April 2011, he said—

In a short period of time, people of the Alash have turned into a strong, rich, respected nation with great opportunities. Our country that connects the East and the West is considered a standard of the harmony of civilizations. Our capital that found itself on the banks of the Yessil River is a symbol of solid stability in Eurasia. The kind spirit of Astana is offering a noble key to peace and harmony to the whole world [sic]. (Nazarbayev 2011)

Here, Nazarbayev promotes and propagates an overarching value which, as was alluded to above, has been almost omnipresent in recent years' political discourse—namely, stability. In contrast to the speech quoted earlier, it is not, however, the peaceful relationship between ethnic groups which creates stability, but instead the 'kind spirit of Astana'. Especially noteworthy is Nazarbayev's reference to *Alash*, a historical concept which is ripe with references to ethnically based and secularly oriented Kazakh nationalism (cf. Galick 2014). Mentioning the *Alash* seems to be a way of excluding other ethnic groups from the perceived achievements of the young state. The contradiction between inclusion and exclusion of the various ethnic groups in Kazakhstan is also visible elsewhere in the speech: The election that was held was the best in terms of organization and democracy in the history of not only modern Kazakhstan but also, experts believe, of the whole Central Asia. Voting for the course of stability and prosperity, every citizen of Kazakhstan was voting for his future, the future of his family, his country, and the Motherland! (Nazarbayev 2011)

The point we wish to make here is that President Nazarbayev mentioned both ‘his country and the Motherland’ at the same time. Whereas the first reference is to statehood, the latter term could be interpreted to imply the places of origin of the ethnic groups present in Kazakhstan—which is Korea for the Korean minority, and Germany for the Germans, and so on—and indeed also, by extension, Kazakhstan for the Kazakhs. The reference could also be used to recall the pre-independence era, when the Soviet Union was often referred to as the Motherland. Regardless of which, and unlike the quote about the Alash, Nazarbayev is here addressing not only the Kazakh ethnic group, but all citizens of Kazakhstan.

This leads to the question of how the political myths of the Kazakh people are used by those in power. One of the most visible examples, which suggest that a shift from political myths of ethnic concord to Kazakhization has indeed taken place, is the language policy (see Bhavna 2007). The Kazakh language has been promoted at the expense of Russian in the civil service, as well as in politics. During the snap presidential elections in 2011, condemned as neither free nor fair by OSCE/ODIHR, language tests were carried out in order to make sure that all candidates were fluent in Kazakh (OSCE/ODIHR 2011). One of the more prominent opposition figures, Vladimir Koslov, chairman of the DVK/Alga party,⁴ was not allowed to run for office on the grounds that his Kazakh skills were insufficient. This move meant that very few people who were not ethnic Kazakhs could stand for election, something which above all discriminates against the substantial minority of ethnic Russians in the country.

Overall, during the past years, the political myths about the Kazakh people and nation have increased in importance in societal discourse and other fields of signification. This is highly visible in the architecture and planning of the new capital city of Astana. In 1997, the decision was taken to move the capital city from Almaty, in the south of the country closer to the border with Kyrgyzstan, to the provincial capital in the northern region of Akmola (Koch 2010: 769). There has been much speculation as to why the move took place. At the time of the inauguration of the new capital, Astana was by Kazakhstani standards no more than a medium-sized town. In terms of climate and logistics, Astana is far from ideal. It is located on the steppe, with few other towns and cities in the surrounding area. During the long winters, temperatures routinely drop below -40°C . The official reason for the move was that the new capital would provide a new beginning for the newly independent state (Yerlan Karin 2011). Others argue, however, that the Akmola region was previously dominated by ethnic Russians, and that

the capital was moved to gain a stronger hold on the border with Russia and the population in the north (Huttenbach 1998: 583f.).

Regardless of the reasons for moving the capital, it is interesting to note how the new capital city was established, which political myths were projected by the new monuments and buildings and how the state envisions the new Kazakhstan. Astana is absolutely chock-a-block with monuments, spectacular modern architecture and broad avenues. One of the most striking buildings is the Baiterek Tower, opened in 2002. It is a 105-metre-high metal structure, topped by a large ball of glass. The symbolic meaning of the Baiterek relates to a Kazakh creation myth. From the top, inside the glass egg, visitors can enjoy a spectacular view of the new city. The tower itself represents the tree of life, where the sacred bird Samruk lays an egg (the glass ball). At the roots of the tree, the dragon Aydahar hides in waiting for an opportunity to eat the egg. Inside the Baiterek, there are additional symbols of the new state. In the centre of the space is a golden handprint of President Nazarbayev. The national anthem is played as VIP visitors place their hand in his.

An even more recent monument in Astana is the Khan Shatyr, an entertainment centre opened in July 2010 as part of the Astana Day, which happens to coincide with the president's birthday. It is a huge structure, with a mall containing a wide variety of international high-street shops. At the top of the structure there is an artificial beach, with sand, palm trees and a wave machine, where visitors can enjoy tropical temperatures. A monorail takes visitors around the top of the building, offering views of the food court and the shops below. The Khan Shatyr is built to resemble a tent⁵; a symbol of nomadic peoples, but not necessarily of all ethnic groups in Kazakhstan. Rather, the reference to the nomadic past serves to exclude some ethnic groups, again most prominently the Russians.

In Astana, Almaty as well as other cities across Kazakhstan, and in conformity with developments in most places in the post-Soviet realm, street names have been changed from the former Soviet names into Kazakh ones, often provided by authors or other prominent persons from cultural fields. In Almaty, 'Lenin' has given way to 'Dostyk', which means Friendship. That street crosses 'Abai', named after the poet and philosopher Abai Qunanbailuli. There is a statue nearby depicting Abai holding a *dombra*, a traditional Kazakh musical instrument. Not far from there, at Independence Square, stands a giant statue replicating the Golden Man, a warrior prince⁶ found in the Turgen Valley and dating from the third or fourth-century B.C. The symbol of the Golden Man carries great significance, as it reiter-

ates the notion that Kazakhstan has a long and noble history. Significantly, the Man itself is on prominent display in the Kazakh National Museum.

Other common street names in contemporary Kazakhstan include references to the ‘Batyr’s, or warriors. Several such warriors have had their names brought back into active recall after the breakup of the Soviet Union. Kabanbai Batyr is probably the most famous of these. Legend has it that he was a warrior who defended the Kazakhs from intruders in the eighteenth century (Aigul Soloyeva 2011). Since independence, another Batyr has become important in the imagery—Karasai Batyr. According to the myth, he belonged to the same clan as president Nazarbayev. In the village of Ush Kunyr, where Nazarbayev was born, there is a museum in his old school in honour of the Batyr. Inside is a huge mural depicting the Batyr, with a snow leopard visible through the clouds. The principal of the school, who is from the same sub-clan as the president, explains:

This is a symbol of Karasai Batyr, it’s a symbol of our tribe, it’s a symbol of our president, and it’s a symbol of our nation. It’s a rare animal, with its origin in the Tien Shan. The Kazakhs never went to war, but thanks to the warriors, they defended this land from the Jungars [Mongol Tribes from East Turkestan]. (Medeurova Gulzhan Abdilachayeva 2011)

Apart from the way that a Kazakh political myth is used to promote nationalist sentiments, there are underlying values which after all seem to connect the Kazakh myths to the multi-ethnic ones. Again, stability and peace are highly valued; and the school principal, Ms. Abdilachayeva, asserts that the Kazakhs have never gone to war, despite the contradiction that both Kabanbai and Karasai Batyr are said to have taken part in battles to defend their land.

THE PRESIDENT: PERSONALITY CULT

The Central Asian republics are known for having leaders that act more like strongmen than presidents elected by proper popular mandate (Brill Olcott 1997). In Uzbekistan, the longstanding president, Islam Karimov, has built a system where personal loyalty is indispensable for making political careers (Lewis 2008). In Kyrgyzstan, the former presidents Askar Akayev and Kurmanbek Bakiyev, regardless of the different durations of their incumbencies, created regimes where family and friends controlled a large part of the economy. Most notable, however, is the rule of Saparmurad Niyazov (Turkmenbashi) in Turkmenistan, from the gaining of independence in 1992 until his death in 2006. The personality cult

surrounding this former president came close to being a religion, with all the requisite components, including a holy book, the *Ruhmana*, purportedly written by the revered president himself (Slavomir 2005: 308f.). Kazakhstan's president Nazarbayev is usually not thought to go to the same personality-cult extremes as Turkmenbashy, but there are proliferating signs of nation-building myths essentially connected to his person.

Nazarbayev has been the leader of Kazakhstan since independence. During the tumultuous years when the Soviet Union was dissolved, he was markedly wary of steering Kazakhstan towards independence. Instead, he long championed the solution of a reconstructed, revitalized Union, along the lines proposed by the last Soviet president, Mikhail Gorbachev. Trying to retain as much as possible of the old intra-Soviet cooperation, and also economic support from Moscow, he was a strong proponent of tenacious and compensatory ties of bilateral and multilateral cooperation within the Commonwealth of Independent States. He is a staunch supporter of institutionalised free trade agreements and a customs union with the Russian Federation. Within the framework of his interpretation of the ideology of Eurasianism (Laruelle 2008), he has tried to promote as much cooperation as possible across state borders in the former Soviet Union.

However, being a pragmatist, Nazarbayev, as was suggested above, has also adhered to both the ideals of a multi-ethnic Kazakhstan and sentiments of Kazakhization as modes of securing legitimacy for his regime. Thus it is no exaggeration to say that as a political leader, he has shown a penchant for flexibility and an ability to adapt to changing political circumstances. Although there have certainly been challenges to his power during his various terms in office, especially during the early years, very few have dared to criticize him openly. In April 2015 he was re-elected for the fifth time to serve another five-year term in office, gaining close to a striking (and rather suspect) 98 per cent of the official vote (The World Factbook 2015).

As elaborated on above, there are manifold and increasing signs that President Nazarbayev is being used as a mythological figure in the Kazakhstani imaginary. There is a museum in his honour in Astana; a new university in the capital has been named after him; and, as mentioned earlier, his handprint features at the top of the Baiterek Tower. These are only a few examples of the ever-expanding array of mythological attributes surrounding the president. President Nazarbayev and the state are often spoken of as being indivisible, and it is hard to discern where the domain of the one ends and the jurisdiction of the other starts. The CEO of the state-owned mining company Kazakhmys made a panegyric speech to Nazarbayev at the Nur Otan party congress in 2011:

During the first years after independence there were hardships. Nazarbayev was the one to protect us, he was our stability. Now there has been progress in government, improvement in companies and we are reaching democratization. ... Nazarbayev has the deepest love and respect of all those in Kazakhstan. ... All countries need a national idea. Our current national idea is you, President Nazarbayev. (Vladimir Kim 2011) Consequently, Nazarbayev's supporters frequently attribute Kazakhstan's successes to the president personally. He is the one who, through his efforts, has brought about stability, and is also the guarantor of its successful maintenance:

We will, thanks to him [President Nazarbayev], continue on our path of development and stability. He has shown us the way to inter-ethnic peace. (anonymous deputy in the Lower House of Parliament 2011)

Indicatively, both Nurlan Uteshev, leader of the youth wing of the Nur Otan Party, and Yerlan Karin, party secretary of Nur Otan, argue that the meaning of the party is not independent of the president. They both admit that the party itself has no identity other than being supportive of the president (Nurlan Uteshev 2011; Yerlan Karin 2011). This, at the very least, seems likely to generate trouble once a succession of power becomes acute. As Nazarbayev has now reached the mature age of 75 (he was born in 1940), such a time does not seem very distant.

In May 2010, the parliament adopted the Leader of the Nation Law, awarding the president a new title and lifetime immunity from political or criminal responsibility for himself and his family, as well as imposing penalties for any defamation of his persona. Aside from these politically oppressive measures, the title ‘Leader of the Nation’ itself implies a mythical role for Nazarbayev. One of the MPs at the 2011 Nur Otan congress used the new epithet:

The tasks set before us by Nazarbayev will be successfully implemented. He is truly a nationwide president. We must all help to take care of our Leader of Nation because only he can bring us forward.... There can be no other sun in the sky. (Vladimir Nehoroshev 2011)

Thus the way that President Nazarbayev is spoken about—as the Leader of the Nation, the sun in the sky, as the national idea itself—implies almost god-like and other-worldly qualities. His handprint in the Baiterek Tower and the alleged clan-connection to Karasai Baityr are among the examples that indicate the emergence of a personality cult. Although, as has been said, these ambitions are not as clearly articulated as they once were in Turkmenistan, there are certainly elements of political myth surrounding his persona. Unlike the situation in Turkmenistan, these myths do not

revolve around the physical image of the president. There are no statues of Nazarbayev gracing the streets of the major cities, at least not yet. Instead, the budding personality cult is mostly expressed through other and slightly more subtle mechanisms and forms.

CONCLUSION

At first glance, there seems to be little ongoing discursive struggle over political myths, history and the definition of the state in contemporary Kazakhstan. Stability is still the key word, a societal mantra of sorts and a superior value; and on the surface this indeed seems to be an accurate description of the situation. However, when subjected to closer scrutiny, this impression may not be fully borne out by social reality. The Kazakhstani mythscape is thoroughly dominated by the president and the noticeable, albeit comparatively restrained, personality cult that surrounds him. Even if the legitimacy that Nazarbayev can claim, in view of the authoritarian traits of the Kazakhstani political system, is far from the ideal type propounded in Western democracies, he enjoys widespread popular acceptance and support, not least as he has come to be seen as a guarantor of domestic stability and peace.

Seen through the analytical lens of political myth, Nazarbayev has been totally dominant in occupying the mythscape. He has personified the Kazakhization phase of national legitimation, just as he used to be the primary representative and promoter of the multi-ethnic concord constantly reiterated during the first decade of Kazakhstani independence. Toeing the same line as his colleagues among the Central Asian leaders (he and President Karimov of Uzbekistan are now the only ones left from the original cast), Nazarbayev was in the early years quick to capitalize on a national framing of Islam to boost his own, then rather precarious, legitimacy. Similarly, when Eurasianism was in vogue in Central Asia, and while it was still seen by many to be desirable to restore as many of the links of intra-Soviet cooperation as possible, Nazarbayev was there, too, the major spokesman and inspirer. Indeed, it would seem that he has always been there; he has always personally dominated the mythscape, and it is very hard to imagine contemporary Kazakhstan without him.

The president personifies the mythscape and the shifts that have taken place therein. All the way from ethnic concord to Kazakhization, the one stable and predictable figure remains the president. He does not need to

draw legitimacy from political myth, since he is the political myth personified, and therefore he is both the source and the benefactor of the legitimacy engendered by political myth. As long as the personality cult is successful, the political myths constructed around his person attain the features of self-fulfilling prophecies. And while this is the case there can truly be no other sun in the sky.

The total dominance of the president in Kazakhstan's political life, and his massive impact on the contents of the mythscape, is of course a potential problem which will grow in magnitude by the year. Since Nazarbayev has now reached far into his seventies, it is inevitable that the question of his succession will soon have to be placed on the political agenda. It is not hard to imagine that a crisis of legitimation might erupt once he exits the scene. When that time comes, it will be far from certain that the presently prevailing political myths will prove sufficient to secure popular support for the rulers and societal stability in the country. Kazakhstan treads a fine line between inclusive myths of religion and ethnicity, and exclusive myths of Kazakhization and Kazakh spirituality. There is no guarantee that Nazarbayev's successor will be as deft in maintaining the balance. Considering an option that still seems to be open, there is also a possibility that Kazakhstan will steer closer to cultural and symbolic Islam to define its path to national identity.

Forming a personality cult around an ageing leader is always a risky project. Just as nature abhors a vacuum, the president's successor will have to construct his (or her, which is less likely given traditional gender hierarchies in Central Asia) own foundation of legitimacy. There is a limited supply of political myths to choose from, but what myth is eventually chosen as the main legitimizing device will have a decisive impact on political developments in post-Nazarbayev Kazakhstan.

NOTES

1. Mia Orange conducted the interviews for her Ph.D. project on the persistence and demise of party and elite dominance in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Kenya and Tanzania. Most of the interviews were conducted in Russian with the assistance of an interpreter.
2. In this chapter, a distinction is made throughout between Kazakhs, the ethnic group, and Kazakhstanis, which is used to refer to all citizens of Kazakhstan.

3. Ro'i and Wainer conducted a survey in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The respondents were classified according to titular ethnic belonging. The results showed that 7.2 per cent of Kazakhs pray five times a day, while 32 per cent of the Uzbeks, 41.1 per cent of the Uzbeks and 8.3 per cent of the Kyrgyz do the same (2009: 307).
4. DVK/Alga has attempted, and failed, to register as a political party for many years (Koslov 2010). Vladimir Koslov has been sentenced to seven and a half years in prison, having been found guilty of 'inciting social discord', 'calling for the forcible overthrow of the constitutional order', and 'creating and leading an organized group with the aim of committing one or more crimes.' The charges stemmed from his support of striking workers in Western Kazakhstan during violent clashes with police in December 2011.
5. The Khan Shartyr does not, however, resemble a yurt, the traditional Kazakh type of tent.
6. Or princess, the gender actually being unknown.

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Negotiating the Homeland: Diasporic Consciousness and Social Stratification Among Hadramis in the Indian Ocean region

Leif Manger

The aim of this paper is to contribute to an understanding of the fascinating migration history of the Hadramis of South Yemen and the resulting emergence of Hadrami diasporic communities throughout the Indian Ocean region. Migration from Hadramaut has always been a result of many different factors. It was initiated by drought and tribal wars at home in Hadramaut, but was also the result of people pursuing trading opportunities in the Indian Ocean region. Some Hadramis travelled as Islamic missionaries. The migration has brought the Hadramis to South East Asia, to parts of India, to the Comoro Islands in the Indian Ocean, to the Swahili and Somali coasts, as well as African countries bordering the Red Sea. In the process, the migrants have had to deal with very different local conditions, characterized by various ecologies, economies, political systems, and sociocultural and civilizational frameworks.

A Hadrami diaspora has emerged, with various links between these communities and their homeland. Political and economic relationships played important roles in the homeland, as did the religious connections based on the Shafie school of Islam and Sufi-inspired practices. Since the most

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common migrant in the early centuries of migration was a man who was both a trader and a religious missionary, most often from the Sada group, we can term the evolving communities both a 'trade diaspora' and a 'religious diaspora.' We see as well that poor Hadramis, from non-Sada groups, also travelled, encouraged by the various labour needs within the global economy of the nineteenth century. These groups also became part of the Hadrami diaspora, and from the nineteenth century on we may also talk about a Hadrami 'labour diaspora' (see, for example, Cohen 1997).

Rather than getting lost in typologies and processes of classification, we should take a closer look at the underlying diasporic processes. What we then see is a diaspora which takes on various shapes and forms. The Hadramis, in their various diaspora communities, do not constitute any predetermined community, society or group. The Hadrami diaspora has no centre except for a point of origin, and is characterized by being highly adaptive. At certain times, movements appear to be organized in ways that we may term diasporic; in other periods this is not necessarily the case. This perspective of a dynamic process is in contrast to the alternative understanding of the Hadrami diaspora as an ever-present, special type of society, with predefined cultural characteristics that originate in the homeland. There is thus a need to focus more explicitly on the complexity of the diaspora concept by paying more attention to the intersectionality of many processes. In this sense, diaspora space is a contested space, and the collective 'we' must be problematized. This means that we need to look at institutions, discourses and practices rather than assume ahistorical constructs. Rather than assume fixity, we need analyses of historical dynamics and a narrative that can show historical process. In short, historical agency must be problematized.

The point about historical agency relates particularly to the normative dimensions of diaspora and the ways through which historical processes provide material for different *interpretations* among people and, therefore, lead to discussions of change. It is not enough to discuss the social form of diasporas; one must also look at the formation of *diasporic consciousness*. Thus, we may ask whether diaspora is an objective or subjective phenomenon. Movement between homeland and diaspora spaces, whether physical and real or cognitive and imagined, is exercised through myriad networks, including kinship, trade and religious networks, and is affected by technologies of travel and communication. The diasporic reality may also be established through literature or displayed in museums. Or it may only be available in associations in which diasporic links are celebrated.

My argument here is that one needs to approach the issue not by making diaspora consciousness a special type of consciousness, but instead by discussing it in the context of broader processes through which consciousness and meaning are established. Some narrate the present as a configuration of the past; others argue that the flux in the present is novel, and that what went on in the past cannot be taken for granted. It is not possible to predict how such debates will be resolved, nor what the specific topics will be, but they do relate to the existence of different modes of historicity. This question of historicity demands a better understanding of a group's self-definition. We need to be concerned with people's own narratives, through which we can see the group memory evolve, and at the same time see how such claims to historical truths are debated.

The Hadrami diasporic history shows many interesting examples of how broader colonial processes have affected Hadrami reactions and debates. One example may be to see how what has been termed the Muslim 'awakening' in the nineteenth century expressed in neo-Sufism and in discourses of social reform, can be linked to, and seen as a reaction to the colonial policies of the day, characterised by a focus on 'civilizing projects'. The 'awakening' among Muslims became a parallel to the 'civilizing mission' of the colonial powerholders. Among the Hadramis, such 'reformers', who argued for the 'awakening', often came from the groups of well-established migrants who had the means to engage in education, travel and networking. The Sada represented this type of group. Through education in the Hijaz, and links to Islamic centres such as Istanbul and Cairo, combined with their economic successes in the diaspora, the Sada were able to play a role within the Hadrami community as reformers, linking their dominant social and economic position within the wider Hadrami community with a rhetoric of the need of reform among the poor. The elite groups, as community leaders, could then make demands to the power-holders, whether the colonial authorities or the various sultans in the areas in which they lived.

At other times, we see that internal differences between the Hadramis, among the elites and common people and between the Sada and the non-Sada were problematized; and the assumed sense of unity collapsed. Instead of appearing to be community leaders, the Sada were attacked for being part of the colonial elites, as economic exploiters and, in religious terms, as Sufis who venerated their ancestors more than God. Such debates thus brought the history of new groups into perspective, showing that the Hadrami diaspora had other sides to it than the hegemonic discourses had

revealed, and that this silenced history also depicts a diasporic reality. Such an actualization of history in different historical periods is given direction by the various spheres of experience people have, which help create 'horizons of expectations'. Such horizons may be local and particularistic in their orientation, or be generalizing, linking local events to broader historical contexts. However, the process of creating self-awareness is dynamic and takes place within specific contexts. This requires a broad exploration, not only of ideas, but also of the historical context within which such ideas are produced, reproduced and changed.

In pursuing analyses along these lines, I have tried to understand how the transfer of collective memories relates to various technologies of transmission. Important technologies of transmission are, for instance, genealogical structures, commemorative rituals in specific places at certain times and oral storytelling. With the spreading of literacy, the availability of printed books and the emergence of audio-cassettes, television and the internet, new ways have opened for the transmission of the collective memories, further underlining the fact that the construction of memories is affected by the various types of technologies that may be involved in the narration. The various 'revolutions' in the nineteenth century, both in transportation and in general telecommunications, and also in the development of the printing press—that facilitated increased production and, in turn, dissemination of books and newspapers—all affected what types of stories people heard, and what 'truths' local people came to believe.

In our contemporary world, the use of cyberspace and the establishment of internet sites that bring people of different political orientations and goals together have a similar function. But it is important to note that both in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the ensuing debates show disagreement and contestation as often as agreement and shared points of view. Narratives may thus produce different understandings of the diasporic realities. While a diasporic history may be important to some, it may be ignored and forgotten by others. This lack of agreement among Hadramis about who they are, and the continuous debates among themselves about their own identities, should not take us in the direction of a noncommittal 'multiple voices' type of approach. Rather, what we need are perspectives based on systematic models of diversity and inequality. We need models that help us demonstrate the ways in which cultural realities are construed and how people come to understand the meaning of these constructions through their practice of social relationships among themselves or through the various technologies of transmission we pointed at

above. The meanings and schemes of classification coming out of such processes are always evaluative and our task is to see how such systems of meaning are constructed and how people understand and act upon them.

My aim in this paper is to show that basic properties of Hadrami 'culture', such as the system of social stratification, have emerged through historical processes, and that their content and form are constantly debated. I argue that this consequently requires a model of diversity in which the criteria for social differentiation (class, ethnicity, caste, race, power, honour, knowledge, kinship, gender and age) must be broken down into more basic processes.

For each general form of social differentiation, there will be different players, different arenas and different games. And in each form, various types of 'values' will be negotiated in certain ways. Such 'value games' are embedded in historical processes shaped by conscious actors pursuing basic concerns in their lives. I will try to show the usefulness of this way of thinking through a discussion of the central role the Sada group occupies in Hadrami history. Although the awareness of group distinctions among the Hadramis has changed through the generations, one divisive line seems to be maintained among the Hadramis themselves: that between the Sada and the non-Sada. But let us start with the system of stratification itself.

HADRAMI STRATIFICATION AND CULTURE

The major groups are the Sada (Seiyd), people who claim descent from the Prophet Mohammed and who have historically been at the top of the religious and social hierarchy; the Mashaikh (Sheikh), who also have considerable religious status but cannot show links of descent to the Prophet; the Qabail (Qabila), who are tribal groups; and the Da'fa (Da'if), among whom are traders and various market labourers. Then there are the Akhdam (Khaddam), or servants, who are involved in various occupations in this local system. Although this general system has been taken to be uniform, for instance, as described in various colonial reports, such claimed uniformities should be treated with caution and not form the basis for hasty generalizations. Clearly, there are factors that work towards the maintenance of the system, for instance, the so-called *kafu'a* marriage (i.e., the rule that there should be no marriage outside the group, and particularly that girls cannot marry men of lower status). But there is no total agreement on this. Rather, we see arguments about ranking in general, and where individual persons and families belong in particular.

A system of stratification such as that of the Hadrami must not be taken as a timeless, norm-driven state of equilibrium, but instead theorized within broader historical contexts of economics and politics. Focusing on the way the difference between the Sada and the non-Sada groups evolved in the twentieth century, I intend to show particularly how the Tariqa al-Alewiyya, a Sufi-orientated brotherhood, profoundly affected the way the Sada could develop their adaptive strategies in the Indian Ocean region. I argue that the spread and importance of the Tariqa al-Alewiyya must be combined with the Sada's involvement in and success in trade. Such developments have helped the Sada maintain their identity, as well as their position on top of the Hadrami stratification system.

There is, however, no automatic consensus among the Hadramis about what position the Sada should have in their society—and I will provide some examples of how that position has been debated among them. New dynamics in the diaspora, as well as in the homeland, lead to new understandings and new evaluations about how the world is to be understood. Through such discussions, we can illustrate how the acceptance of certain positions—for instance, on Sada social and religious supremacy—depends on the acceptance of specific versions of Hadrami history, positioning certain groups as religious experts, in command of religious knowledge, and others as receivers of that knowledge. But we can also show how this can be contested by members of other groups, who perceive their position in a different way.

Whereas the Tariqa al-Alewiyya reproduce Sada groupness by organizing around religious networks, and special constraints on marriage help maintain that groupness, others are less focused on history and genealogy, and reproduce their identities more through existing, contemporary relationships based on occupational relationships, on commercial success, and on their immediate families. Rather than focusing on long lines of descent, people in this second category focus on a genealogy going back only three generations. In this case, the reproduction of identity is not a reflection of engagement with the history of the group, but rather a product of specific contexts, some of which encourage links to the homeland while others do not.

The issue of Sada dominance cannot be reduced to one of religious organizations and theology. Dynamics in the religious field must be linked to social and economic factors among the Hadramis themselves, such as the wider stratification system, the political system, position in the market, and so on. Hadrami migration must be understood in relation to elements

we now think of as typical of ‘globalization’; that is, the migration was part of larger waves of population movement across the ocean generated by global economic and political forces. We first meet the Hadramis towards the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century, at a time in which the European presence in the Indian Ocean region was changing from one based on commercial interests alone, to the imperialistic ambition that led to the occupation of ever-expanding territories. Various centers in South Asia and Southeast Asia were being subjected to Western rule and exploitation—the mechanisms being trade, as before, but also plantation agriculture, mining, cash-cropping and intensified forms of slavery. Leading groups of Hadramis maintained various links to individual power-holders and elite groups, and were indeed, in many places, part of such ruling elites. But new groups of Hadramis also travelled in these periods, ending up as part of impoverished groups that were exploited in colonial economies.

The diaspora thus has a clear internal power dimension. Because of this, class differences within it must be accounted for. In the Hadrami case, an economic and political elite lived as diasporic cosmopolitans, experiencing the reality of the community they lived in as a site of novel possibilities; and they saw their history as a participation in a glorified process. Another segment of the same group, however, was at the bottom of the ladder of stratification, experiencing a life defined by discrimination and exclusion and either ignoring the glorified history of the elite or actively resisting it.

HOMELAND-DIASPORA DYNAMICS: PROBLEMATIZING DIASPORIC CONSCIOUSNESS AMONG SADA AND NON-SADA GROUPS

The point of departure for my discussion is thus the reproduction over time of the Hadrami stratification system both at home and in the diaspora. What is important is not to reify this system, but rather to see how the various groups involved have operated and created dynamics that have shaped the system as a whole, and also facilitated change. Although the Sada have been considered superior, their dominance is not a given. It must be understood according to particular social developments that led to this status. Such positioning was affected by processes at home in Hadramaut as well as in the diaspora. At home, well-to-do Sada dominated agriculture, including the cultivation of cereals and dates. As noted by Arai (2004), Sada were less likely to migrate because of the profits they

enjoyed through agriculture. One could, then, infer that migration was a strategy pursued only by those Sada who were not favourably placed in the system at home.

Whatever the motive, we know that there were members of the Sada group among the early migrants engaging in trade as well as Islamic missionary activities. These migrating Sada developed relationships to leading groups in the areas in which they settled, and in many cases became prominent members of the wider community. Families with names like al-Attas, al-Kaf, al-Saqqaf and al Juneid are examples of migrants who flourished in their new homes. However, during the last century and a half, the typical Hadrami migrants—traders and Islamic missionaries—were joined by new groups of migrants seeking opportunities. Harold Ingrams estimated in 1936 that the number of Hadramis living in the diaspora at that time corresponded to between 20 and 30 per cent of the total Hadrami population at home. Many migrants stayed away for a number of years but intended to return home when they had made a fortune. Among the resident population of Hadramaut were also many who had been abroad at some time in their lives (Ingrams 1937). The increased rate of out-migration changed perceptions about the traditional stratification system in Hadramaut. Non-Sada groups, considered of lower status than the Sada, developed new views about themselves and began to question their subordinate position in the stratification system, particularly in relation to the Sada. As people from the lower social groups in Hadramaut began to travel and work outside Yemen, their improved opportunities and relative success led to changes in the diaspora population's notions of the social order. This brought a new dimension to Hadrami politics abroad and at home. It also had an impact on what may be termed 'historical consciousness' among Hadramis.

TOWARDS A BROADER UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

As indicated in the introduction, my discussion in this paper will show that the Hadrami system of social stratification cannot be categorized as being in a state of timeless equilibrium, characterized by norm-driven practices. Nor can it be presented as a holistic system of evaluation, or a cultural system upon which political and economic relationships are automatically built (Dumont 1980). To speak about equilibrium is to lose sight of the complexities and heterogeneous character of the field of events and

relationships within which such a system of stratification operates. And it leads our thinking towards assumptions of a modern/pre-modern dichotomy, which we want to avoid. What we see in the case of Hadramis is that the notion of 'tradition' is by no means unproblematic; and although the various social strata exist, the role played by such a system in people's lives must be problematized.

It follows from the foregoing that the Sada, for example, maintain an identity as a group, and that identity is treasured by its members. However, the picture is less clear with the non-Sada. Although there are several categories of non-Sada (including Mashaiyykh, Qabail, Hirthan and Akhdam), we see a tendency in the diaspora for non-Sada categories to be redefined and lumped together under the broader category of Mashaiyykh. At the same time, the boundaries between Sada and non-Sada continue to be resistant to change. Overall, however, the stratification system does not represent a closed order of ideology, but is situated in a broader context of overlapping processes and activities. It is within such open contexts that systematization takes place, surmounting the assumed boundaries. Because of this, the system of social stratification cannot be divided into one social and one ideological side: the social and conceptual categories are aspects of the same continuity (Perlin 1994).

Rather than typologizing societies, then, we should look for models that explain the dynamics in different types of societies within the same general conceptual framework. Although the ideological level is of great importance, it is not sufficient for understanding a total system of ideas. Nor can we assume that such an ideological system by itself will organize the level of economic, political and social organization. The starting point should instead be relationships among people, to see the congruence or lack of congruence between status categories and actual positions in occupational, political, religious and economic fields.

I do not dispute that there may be overlap, but that would be an empirical finding rather than a theoretical postulate. If there is no congruence, we need to explain that situation, too; for instance, why do earlier notions about status and differentiation linger on in new and different contexts? The stratification groups should not be taken to be characterized by essentialized 'cultures'; rather, we should look at how they are organized around certain clusters of ideas about origin and about the place of the groups in the world—in other words, about their symbolic capital. We can also, however, look at the social organization of the groups, and how specific networks or certain centres may play key roles in such reproduction.

In addition, we need information on how members of the groups see themselves and their history. Thus we can see how various forms of validation are used to establish acceptance for a certain version of history, or of certain genealogical facts. I say ‘facts’, but the analytical point is that they are not facts, but rather ‘claims’ about how the world is organized. Hence, we are looking at different world views.

On a general level, then, we can link historical epochs with types of identities, discourses and worldviews. Moreover, in periods of general change, the basis for all these can be problematized and made the focus of new types of debates among people. Such debates relate to the field of religion in that the stratification system may be both defended and attacked through arguments based on an understanding of Islamic history. But they also show that different groups among Hadramis have different ways of perceiving themselves as groups, thus making it necessary to broaden the discussion to different types of Hadrami historicity. Such broader perspectives are necessary in order to understand the dynamics of the stratification system found in Hadramaut, a system which is also found in Southern Arabian communities in general. The way the system operates, and the ways people relate to it, show a lot of variation—in Southern Arabia as well as in Hadramaut, and even more so in the diasporic communities.

SOCIAL STRATIFICATION IN THE HOMELAND

In the most comprehensive analysis of the social stratification system in Hadramaut, Abdalla Bujra (1971) identified the important building block in Hadrami society as descent and descent status (*nasab*). Hadramis recognize two lines of descent: that of the Prophet Mohammed’s line, which is the northern Arabian lines of Adnan, and that of Qahtan. These two ultimate ancestors are ranked, and lineage from the Prophet is ranked higher than that from Qahtan. Those Hadramis who do not descend from these lines are in the lowest status groups. This system allows for an easy categorization of people into three groups within which marriage is possible. The preference is always for marriage with a person of equal social status. However, other factors can play a role.

According to Bujra, the Hadrami theory of descent implies that any group of people tracing their descent to a common ancestor share not only agnatic ties but also other characteristics which stem from that ancestor. Thus the Sada (in Bujra’s case, al-Attas, from Hureida) insist that their

descent from the Prophet is *mutalsil* (linked like a chain). This means that the descent is a true one, and it is meticulously documented, as it is believed the powers of the Prophet have been passed down to the contemporary members. The Sada are superior in status to other lineages that may be religious but descend from local holy men (in Hureida, this would be Basahl). Thus the *silsilah* of such a group (Basahl) is not chain-like, given that there are gaps in the links back to Qahtan. Such ancestries go back to a known ancestor, but after that the specific ancestors are not known. Other groups also descended from Qahtan can follow their links back to specific persons known as warriors. The Mesakin (the poor ones) are also believed to inherit specific qualities, but from ancestors only three to five generations back. In regard to Hureida, then, Bujra presents al-Attas as the Sada family at the top of the stratificational system; a system that also includes Mashaikh and Qabail. The Masakin are included among specific groups called Hirthan (whose ancestors were farmers), Akhdam (servants) and Subyan (labourers, servants and artisans). Sylvain Camelin (1997) has challenged the generality of this system of stratification and claims that Bujra has presented an ideal version of the total Hadrami stratification system based only on the Hureida situation, a system that later has become central to our understanding of social stratification in Hadramaut generally. Camelin shows how other researchers, having undertaken studies elsewhere, find regional variation in the way groups are classified. The empirical variation—demonstrated by authors such as Hartley (1961), on the Beduin Nahdi group; Camelin herself, from the fishing town of Shihir; and Mathisen (n.d.) from Ghail Bawasir, founded by a *mashaiyykh* and where there are few Sada—is proof enough that Camelin's point is well taken and certainly merits attention.

However, even if Bujra's case is only valid for the situation in Hureidha, the discussion of the stratification system in Hadramaut as a whole continues to be relevant. One important general factor maintaining the system of Sada exclusivity throughout the region observed by Bujra is the equality of marriage partners—*kafa'a*. Thus the Attas argue that a man should marry someone equal in descent to himself, but that if there is no such person, he may marry a woman of lower lineal status. This is because the children of such a union will be considered to descend from the father. However, spouses from the same agnatic line are preferred, or at least from a family of comparable status in wealth and religious prestige. A woman, however, should never be allowed to marry a man from lower descent groups, since the children in such a case would become members of the father's status group.

In addition to marriage and genealogical links, the al-Attas also base their position on the institution of *hawtah*, through which they can exploit their religious status to mediate between the tribes in the region; a mediation creating links that in turn engender protection of the town. A *hawtah* is an area controlled by a 'holy man', in which people can seek refuge in times of trouble, protected by the general authority and prestige of such a person.

The position of the Sada is underpinned not only by ideology, but also by politics and economics. When the Qaity and Kathiri sultanates were established in the nineteenth century, many Sada were brought in as administrators. They were able to further exploit their position through education, wealth and their relations with sultans. Economically, their elite status depended on ownership of land. The agricultural system under the Kathiri and Qu'ayti sultanates, as already noted in the case of Hureidha, consisted of a few small landholdings cultivated by the owners, though in some cases there were large sub-tribe/clan holdings cultivated exclusively by sharecroppers, on contracts of ten to twenty years (*mukhabara*). The sharecroppers were almost always from different sub-tribes or families. In the rare cases when they were from the landowning group, they would work the land on the same basis as other sharecroppers. The landowners were mostly from the Sada group.

The contracts illustrate a basic relationship between what inputs the parties involved brought to the cultivation process and the share of the harvest they would receive, which of course meant that contracts varied a lot. But certain general patterns can be discerned. For instance, sharecroppers who provided all the inputs kept 90 per cent of their harvest, paying landlords 10 per cent for the use of their land. In irrigated areas, 2.5 per cent of the harvest went to the party who had invested in irrigation technology (wells, pumps, canals). There were other factors as well, but as most of the inputs (pumps, seeds, fertilizers, means of mechanization) in reality came from the landlords; this meant also that he gained the lion's share of the harvest with the sharecropper only receiving the part assigned to his labour input, roughly 25 per cent?

A DYNAMIC SYSTEM

The system outlined above was dynamic and was affected by different types of change. Colonial rule was one such factor. In the late 1930s, Harold Ingrams was the British government's resident advisor to Qaity

and Kathiri. The Qaity Sultanate was then a British protectorate, with a resident advisor to the government based in Mukalla. He kept in close contact with the *wazir* (prime minister) and the members of the Council of State, was responsible for external relations and internal security and had control over the Hadrami Bedouin Legion. Militarily, he was backed by the Royal Air Force (RAF) and British troops based in Aden. Below this top level were the governors of the five provinces, each having two or three districts looked after by a *ga'im* (district administrative officer). Courts dealt with civil cases according to Islamic law, while a chief justice, or *qadi*, sat in the Supreme Court in Mukalla. Local councils represented the lowest level of the system.

Despite the changes brought about by the colonial administration, however, the Sada families in Hadramaut managed to maintain their dominant position under the new circumstances. To use the al-Attas of Hureida as an example, this particular Sada family managed to dominate the town council. They also controlled the local courts and exploited new opportunities through education. Moreover, the family issued certificates of good conduct, necessary for obtaining passports, to labour migrants. Al-Attas is thus a typical case of the Sada adapting to new situations and contexts, maintaining their elite position in the process.

The British strengthened their rule through their relationships with prominent Sada families, involving them in policymaking and giving them preferential treatment. Not surprisingly, a second 'wind of change' produced social forces in strong opposition to the position of the Sada. This development was connected to the emergence of new ideological trends in the region, including Arab nationalism and a growing call for independence for Arab states. In Hureida, non-al-Attas people organized around such issues, and the Basahl group became the leaders of opposition to the al-Attas. Clubs were formed, expressing lines of difference. Those of the lower strata could also claim new positions of equality through involvement in trade unions, receiving ideological support from a new generation of radicalized Arab leaders. In the late 1960s, the Qaity and Kathiri sultanates, together with other Southern Arabian sultanates, remerged as the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, with a communist regime, proclaiming farmers, fishermen and workers as heroes, and condemning the Sada as 'feudalists'.

There were also profound changes in the Wadi Hadramaut agricultural system and the position of the Sada within it. Independence in 1967 was the beginning of a turbulent period. The Land Reform Law of 1968 established

the legal grounds for the expropriation of all lands belonging to sultans, emirs and sheikhs. It also established maximum holdings per family for those who would receive portions of the confiscated land. But the law was largely unimplemented. Two years later, a second Land Reform Law (No. 27 of 1970) was passed and implemented, in some cases by force.

All holdings exceeding 2.5 feddans of well-irrigated, and 5 feddans of spate-irrigated (from a river or a stream), land were expropriated and redistributed among sharecroppers and labourers, who were given usufruct rights. Farmers were also encouraged to join cooperatives, and in the case of those who had received land through the new agrarian reform legislation, such cooperative membership was even made compulsory. To ensure implementation of the law and to encourage peasants to continue their opposition to the former regime, the National Liberation Front (NLF), which took power at independence, organized a series of *intifad-hat* (sponsored uprisings), during which groups of peasants accompanied by NLF cadres took the land by force for redistribution. The land was now owned by the state and only usufruct rights were granted. Throughout the 1970s, the regime continued its socialization of all productive industries. Cooperatives were seen as a step towards the collectivization of agriculture. After an initial rise in production in the mid-1970s, production fell, and problems of organization became apparent.

This led to a reconsideration of policy, which also affected the running of cooperatives. In particular, farmers wanted tenure documents showing their right to land received through the earlier agrarian reform. The issuing of such documents for individual plots had been seen as incompatible with the ultimate aim of collective agriculture, and hence none were issued. Although formal, personal ownership of land and water was impossible due to their belonging to the state, in the 1980s the government started issuing tenure documents giving farmers long-term usufruct rights to their land, including security of tenure and the right to bequeath such property. The state continued, however, to assert its right to repossess land that was left uncultivated. The changes had only started at the time of unification. Collective cultivation had not been widely adopted, and in most cases peasants insisted on working their own land. However, group farming had taken place in certain places, particularly where new irrigation techniques were introduced, including the Wadi Hadramaut Development Project (see Lackner 1985, for a history of the PDRY).

After the unification of North and South Yemen in 1990, Prime Ministerial Decree No. 65 of 1991 laid out the principles and procedures

to be followed for the return of land to former owners and the payment of compensation to the dispossessed former land reform beneficiaries of the PDRY. A number of committees were formed to implement the decree: the higher committee was headed by the minister of agriculture assisted by his deputy minister, and included the ministers of local administration, justice, legal affairs, as well as *awqaf*. In each governorate, special committees were established under the leadership of the governor; in each district, a committee was composed of a leader, most often the director of agriculture, a representative of the legal department, and also a number of selected community members. A report summarizing the situation in Wadi Hadramaut, stated that compensation for the loss of land following the return of previously confiscated land had been largely completed five years after passing the decree. The remaining cases were those that required further legal attention.

SADA/NON-SADA DYNAMICS

The above stories reflect longstanding problems in Hadramaut, and involve Sada and non-Sada groups. During the period of early nationalist awakening, the Sada were targeted by the Arabic language radio stations. Bujra provides an example of this type of ideologically charged rhetoric:

‘The hour of Arab nationalism in South Arabia has arrived. Let the Hashemite reactionaries fold their network of intrigues and conspiracy, for the free Yemenis have placed the last nail in the coffin of the Hashemites, who shall never return.’ (Bujra 1971)

The contemporary situation shows elements of the same Sada/non-Sada tension discussed above. The social and political climate in Hadramaut has in recent years been dominated by the fallout from former landowners returning to reclaim their land, the lower groups having relinquished the land they were given under communist rule. One dramatic example of what occurred is presented by Eng Seng Ho (1997). The case involved a mosque in Hadramaut from which local farmers were ejected after prayer by armed men representing the former Sada landowners. The mosque stood on *waqf* land that had been given to the farmers under the communists. The mosque was situated by the grave of a famous Sada saint and was a centre of *howliyas* and pilgrimages. The farmers went on to build

a mosque nearby, and were assisted by a rich Hadrami migrant living in Saudi Arabia. But as this new mosque was on land belonging to another *wagf*, also controlled by Sada, the dispute continued. Due to the conflict, the Sada declared the prayers in this mosque to be religiously invalid. But at a later date, when the Sada mosque needed repairs, the local Sada could find no one to carry out the work and had to import labourers from North Yemen. The mosque of the labourers became a centre for the Islamic reform movement and a platform for anti-Sada agitation, including criticism of the grave visits and pilgrimages related to Sada traditions (Ho 1997: 10).

The case shows several things of interest to our analysis. First, the old conflicts continue under new circumstances. The non-Sada groups are attracted to the Wahhabi ideology of Islamic fundamentalism, and one might argue that one reason for this is that it provides a new platform for a politicized criticism of Sada hegemony. The Sada—criticized as ‘Hashemites’ under nationalism, as ‘feudalists’ under the communists—are now blamed for being un-Islamic promoters of *shirk* (polytheism) and *tawassul* (mediation) (Ho 1997: 10).

This also explains why Hadramaut was the only region in which the Islah Party received more votes than the government’s Congress Party in the last elections in 1997. The Islah Party (Yemeni Congregation for Reform) has an ideology that is dramatically different from that of the communists, but as a mass organization it can mobilize many of the same groups who supported communism; providing new rhetoric, but talking about old divisions in Hadrami society. It is also interesting to observe how the non-Sada can punish the Sada by refusing to labour for them.

In spite of tension the local production systems in Hadramaut linked the groups to each other in the sense that landowners depended on the labour of the landless. Workers were needed in agriculture, doing work such as tilling; clearing weeds, sand and stones; overseeing water flows; and keeping watch during harvesting. Other labour was required from people in craft occupations, such as smiths, carpenters, potters and masons, and for leading ceremonial services connected to marriages, births and funerals. Under the new policies of privatization, some of these economic relations were re-established, particularly in areas where the conflicts had been few and less intense. In areas where conflict had continued, the new situation generated class-based struggles that had religious overtones.

HADRAMIS IN THE DIASPORA

Moving from the local situation in Hadramut, we can now follow Hadramis into the diaspora and see how members of the various Hadrami groups have adapted and related to each other there. First, we need to establish the basic outline of this early migration history. Hadramis participated in early developments through which the Indian Ocean region became an important arena for travel, trade and learning. Historically, Muslim merchants and shipowners operating in the Arabian coastal towns dominated the western part of the Indian Ocean. Throughout, Hadramis met with people from other parts of the world. To illustrate this, the following comes from Tome Pires' list of visitors and residents in early sixteenth-century Melaka:

Moors from Cairo, Mecca, Aden, Abessynians, men of Kilwa, Malindi, Ormuz, Parsees, Rumes, Turks, Turkomans, Christian Armenians, Gujaratees, men of Chaulk, Dabhol, Goa, the Kingdom of Deccan, Malabars and Klings, merchants from Orissa, Ceylon, Bengal, Arakan, Pgu, Siamese, men of Kedah, Malays, men of Pahang, Paani, Cambodia, Champa, Cochin China, Chinese, Legueos, men of Brunai, Lucoes, men of Tamjompura, Laue, Banka, Linga (they have a thousand other islands), Moluccas, Banda, Bima, Timor, Madura, Java, Sunda, Pamembang, Jambi, Tongkal, Indragiri, Jappatta, Menangkabau, Siak, Argua, Aru, Bata, country of the Tomjano, Pase, Pedir, Maldives. (Pires, *Suma Oriental*, quoted from Curtin 1984: 130)

In spite of all intermingling in such towns, the Muslims remained a distinct group, their lives organized around the *mosque*. Membership in the group of Muslims was defined by faith. Basic symbols to define group membership were food habits, articles of clothing and housing, which all signalled social and religious identities and helped to keep groups apart. Rules about avoidance of pork for Muslims, beef for Brahman Indians and milk and dairy products for the Chinese were thus basic markers for members of the various communities. Clothes also helped to differentiate groups, for example, based on whether people wore trousers or robes. Public buildings expressed the spiritual force of Islam, but also displayed the connection between imperial power and architecture. However, leaving the matter of Muslim identity aside, the question is how, in this type of historical context, a Sada identity could be maintained.

THE SADA IN THE DIASPORA: THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TARIQA AL-ALEWIYYA

As we have seen, a Sada identity among Hadramis depended on an explanation of their origin as direct descendants of the Prophet (*ahl al-bayt*). Through the *kafa'a* marriage practice, the Sada have also been able to link this notion of origin with the reproduction of their own group. Tariqa al-Alewiyya, a special type of Sufi-orientated organization, came to be of great importance in the diaspora. It provided the Sada with a vehicle that enabled the reproduction of their notions as Sada, both as they travelled to new areas in the Indian Ocean, and as new generations were born in the diaspora, without direct access to the home areas in which their own history was embedded. The establishment of this organization came several hundred years after the arrival to Hadramaut from Basra of the first Sada, Ahmad al-Muhajir, in the mid-tenth century. Although open to discussion on historical grounds (Knysh 1993, 1997, 1999), the Sada understanding of their identity is closely connected to the coming of al-Muhajir, and to a conviction that everything is related to his *hijra*, in terms of al-Muhajir's migration from Basra, but also his links to local Beduin tribes who offered protection where the *sayyid* settled. It is likely that in the early years of Sada presence in Hadramaut, they did not stand out in the same way as we see today. Rather, the indications are that Sada were attached to different tribal groups, carried weapons and were involved in many violent activities that would not tally with the contemporary self-understanding of proper Sada behaviour. A question to be asked is, therefore, in what ways did the Sada manage to establish a particular version of their own history? It is when answering this question that the Tariqa al-Alewi becomes important. Its crucial role is keeping together the various patronymic sections, or houses (sing. *bayt*; pl. *buyut*) of Sada descent categories around the spread of religious knowledge and education. There are large houses and small ones—all ranked by wealth, education and profession, and all stressing the importance of their genealogical position. Thus they combine what Bourdieu calls 'economic capital' and 'symbolic capital' (Bourdieu 1986). Some large families maintain relationships with powerholders; smaller ones share the poverty of rural people. What grew out of this history may be called a Sada tradition of knowledge. Knowledge about themselves as a group, and about their historical role in society, has evolved over time and established a specific tradition in which we can define a corpus of knowledge, a social organization of knowledge and specific technologies for transmitting knowledge (see, e.g., Barth 2002).

Kazuhiro Arai (2004) has elaborated on the history of the al-Attas family from Hureidha. Although not among the oldest Hadrami Sada families (it was established in the seventeenth century by the founding ancestor, Umar b. Abdel al-Rahman al-Attas), it includes members related to the local Kathiri sultans, who moreover travelled widely in the areas around the Indian Ocean. Through various chronicles, the family's history is told through the life stories of its most prominent personalities. The primary area of settlement for such individuals was Southeast Asia, but there are also family members in India and East Africa. Some travelled to the Hijaz, particularly for education. Most of these migrants were involved in trade alongside their religious activities. Although most attention has been directed towards saints and religious scholars among the Sada families, over time the Hadrami Sada took up other occupations, not only in trade but also administration and higher learning. While many enjoyed substantial success, there is no doubt that the charismatic saints are the legendary figures of the Hadrami migration saga. They are respected for their religious knowledge and the deeds they carried out during their lifetimes, and their tombs are important meeting loci both for their descendants and other Hadramis. The yearly visits to the tombs (*hawl*) are important for diasporic Hadramis. I mention this to underline my point that it is important not to confuse the ideological level with that of concrete groupness. Most contemporary Sada do not devote their lives to the pursuit of religious knowledge, and are now found in various professional occupations. Children are not expected to take up the vocation of preaching unless particular circumstances lead them in that direction. The *sulb* (support that gives strength) of the Prophet is a dormant quality, which has to be activated through the acquisition of knowledge and action. The specific knowledge is *ilm*, which includes knowledge of God, but less divine knowledge is also revered. As ultimate knowledge lies with the Prophet, the Sada, through their genealogical links to him, carry a special responsibility to manage this type of knowledge. Education, however, is also important, as it can improve a person's character, and make him care more for others (Bang 2003; Freitag 2001, 2003).

BUILDING A MORAL ECONOMY: THE ROLE OF AL WAQF

In Hadramaut, the Sada played an important role in forging alliances with political leaders, supporting specific rulers by writing their histories and legitimizing their positions. They could also undermine the position of leaders by leaving the area controlled by a certain leader. This is the act of

hijra, which in the Islamic tradition means to leave the ‘territory of sin’, and establish a ‘sacred area’, *hawta*, somewhere else, under a different leader. Combining religion and politics was thus common. In addition, unlike the northern Yemeni *zaydis*, Hadrami Sada have always combined religious duties with trading activities (see, e.g., vom Bruck 2005). Teaching is a duty and no payment is expected. But trade is another matter: the aim is to make a profit. As missionaries and traders, the Sada have combined two processes: establishing themselves as pious persons, and at the same time conducting trade in a profitable manner. The way trade was carried out, and particularly how one spent one’s wealth, were important for an individual’s status. Hadrami involvement in publishing serves as an example of an activity in which they could combine commercial interests with the production of religious texts, which was also part of spreading the Word. Similarly, putting trade profits into libraries would also indicate the person’s learning and raise his status. This expands our discussion on Hadramis from one of religious and genealogical status to a broader one concerning how they have maintained themselves as a ‘moral community’ (e.g., Manger 2013). On this level, status appears as a complex notion among Hadramis. Basic factors for the maintenance of honourable status—and thereby cultural capital—among Hadrami men include economic position, occupation, education, descent line, degree of cultural refinement, etiquette, social skills, and generosity as well as command of Arabic.

It is interesting to note that a preoccupation with money in itself is viewed negatively. Economic wealth does not automatically create status. Money can lead to many unwanted things and has to be transformed into something inalienable (see Weiner 1976). Material wealth must be combined with inner strength. This resonates with Simmel’s view that value is not an intrinsic quality of objects but ‘a judgement upon them which remains inherent in the subject’ (Simmel 1990). Thus, a continuous challenge for the successful trader is to show an ability to restrain ‘desire’, in spite of efforts to accumulate money. Islam offers ways to achieve this balance.

One specific institution that Hadramis have made use of to solve the above problem is the *waqf* (pl. *awqaf*). All Islamic schools of law allow Muslims to endow part of their property as *waqf*, which provides a means for Muslims to support various charitable activities, thus transforming capital that would normally go to the market sector—in which notions of profit and selfishness dominate—to an arena in which capital can be transformed

into 'moral capital' that can sustain the trader as a moral person. By facilitating such processes, the *wagf* became an important mechanism for the maintenance of the Sada hegemonic position in the diaspora. It allowed them to combine their involvement in trade with missionary activities, and all these together helped strengthen the position of the Tariqa al-Alewia.

Describing the way the *wagf* operates, Freitag (2002) observes that the donor (*waqif*) must have full ownership of the property (rural and urban real estate, but also moveables such as livestock, books and furniture) that is endowed, and that must be of a tangible and permanent nature and yield revenue. The object is endowed in perpetuity (that is to say, withdrawn from circulation) and cannot be subsequently given away as a gift, inherited, sold or mortgaged. And it should be *fi sabil Allah*, for the sake of God, meaning that the revenues must revert to a charitable purpose, such as a mosque, a hospital or for the relief of the poor. If revenues go directly to charity, it is called *wagf khayri* (charitable). The person can also transfer the revenues to relatives, and other private individuals; but upon the death of the recipient, the revenues are rechannelled to charitable purposes. This is called *wagf dhurri*, or *wagf ahli* (family), and is administered by a *mutawalli*.

The *wagf* has played an important role in the development of the Hadrami economy. However, its importance is not so much as a direct economic institution, but rather as a mechanism that facilitates links between the market sphere and the moral sphere, which raises the issue of Hadrami notions of morality in the economic sphere. Education is a case in point. Schools could be funded by such *wagfs* and thus facilitate the drive towards education, which was so important to the Sada. The education of others was for them a drive towards the 'inner mission', both at home, where they educated nomads so that they could educate their children, and in the diaspora. This is then coupled with the modernist vision of education, which also contains social aims. This was so in the past, and is still the case today.

The issue can be linked to the development of the Hadrami economic success in Southeast Asia. Hadramis, who were at the forefront during various periods of modernization in that region, saw their commercial success slow down in the twentieth century, and they lost out compared to members of other groups, particularly when compared to the success of the Chinese. The Hadramis kept their family firms and continued investing in *wagfs*, investing in cultural capital. If we use Maurice Bloch and Jonathan Perry's (1989) terms of 'short term and long term cycles of accumulation',

it is clear that whereas the short term was focused on capital accumulation, the long term was directed towards a moral economy in which many factors were relevant. This practice resulted in the continuation of earlier business practices, rather than the introduction of new ones or risk-taking that the contemporary economic situation demanded. But this is a matter of scale. If we look at the case of Hadramis in Africa, the family firm has been sufficient to enable Hadramis to compete successfully with other types of economic enterprises; but in Southeast Asia, where the globalized economy is most pronounced, we see the differences most clearly.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE NON-SADA

One factor characterizing the modern history of Hadramis is that a new type of migrant emerged at the end of the nineteenth century. Members of non-Sada groups began to travel and benefit from new opportunities around the Indian Ocean. But their migration and conceptualization of it represent a different pattern to that of the Sada within the Tariqa al-Alewiyya. Members of these groups do not recognize deep genealogical lines; their horizon reaches no further than the third generation in this respect. Names of more distant ancestors are rarely known. Rather than building their social organization on deep genealogies and networks of religious scholars, these groups build their immediate community along the lines of a business enterprise: more specifically, the family firm. Family members have to learn the trade and then work their way up, eventually taking on greater responsibility for decision-making and longer-term planning. The biographies of these people look somewhat alike. Their ancestors came from Hadramaut, often driven into the diaspora by drought, famine and tribal wars; and they established themselves in some type of trade. They all seem to share a narrative that underlines the hardships of the early travellers: they started out in a small and modest way, but they were pious and careful and built wealth over time. The accounts tell of men who began as wandering petty traders, then made wise investments that allowed a settled life. Children were socialized into the family's business, and the whole enterprise was clearly linked to the conditions of wherever they lived and based on local values. In these accounts, those who failed did so because they had not had the proper training, or because historical forces affected them in unfair ways. The homeland is always characterized by images of deprivation, powerlessness and violence. Consistent with this depiction of hardship at home, the migrants are shown as committed to

assisting those who have not migrated. The most wealthy of the non-Sada Hadrami migrants, such as the bin Talib in Singapore, are considered to have worked to fulfil this aim.

Prevailing conditions today are the legacy of earlier economic successes, and failures. From my research on the Hadramis in the diaspora, I have seen how Hadramis in Hyderabad struggled to maintain their economic position after the so-called 'Police Action' of 1948, when the newly independent government of India took control over Hyderabad. Petty traders in Borana and Sudan struggle to turn a profit in small, local economies. But I have also seen larger traders developing new commercial interests in the homeland. The Arab Association in Singapore and the Yemeni Community Association in Addis Ababa are both involved in building trade relationships with Yemen. These networks are also promoted by the Yemeni government. Yemeni President Ali Abdalla Saleh routinely travelled to diasporic communities seeking investment capital from Yemenis living outside the country. The investors made small-talk with the president about their origins in Hadramaut, but their meetings were about business, with questions about the existing investment climate in Yemen, the security of their investments and what measures the president was taking to combat the proverbial Yemeni corruption.

THE SITUATION IN THE DIASPORA: DISCOURSES ABOUT IDENTITIES

The history of the Sada and non-Sada in the diaspora and the tense relationship between them can also be illustrated by the so-called Alewi–Irshadi debate which took place in Southeast Asia after 1905 (Bujra 1967; Kostiner 1984; Ho 1997). This case illustrates my argument that the Sada struggled to maintain their hegemonic position in the diaspora during the early decades of the twentieth century, and that new types of historical consciousness emerged in the process.

The starting point of the debate was whether a *sharifa* (a female member of the Sada) could marry a non-*sayyid*. The arguments about this particular issue were formed as statements about hierarchy and equality: they were clearly linked to the understanding of the stratification system. And as Muslim scholars were involved, such arguments took the form of *fatwas*, issued by scholars who try to provide religious legitimacy for different positions. Several scholars have summarized the debates (see Bujra 1967; Kostiner 1984), and here I draw on Eng Seng Ho (1997). On a question

in the Cairo-based journal *Al Manar* about marriage between a *sharifa* and a Muslim of non-*sharif* descent, Rashid Rida argued that such a marriage should be possible. A Hadrami Sada from Sumatra reacted in the following way:

Know you that equality (**al-kafa'a**) in matrimony is a necessity/duty. And it is by way of pedigree in 4 degrees, thusly: First: to be Arab. Those of non-Arabs are not equal to them. Second: to be of Quraysh. Other Arabs are not equal to them. Third: to be of the Banu Hashim. Others among the Quraysh are not their equals. Fourth: the descendants of Fatima al-Zahra', through her sons Hasan and Husayn; others of the Hasimites are not their equals.

... Know you that nobility (**al-sharaf**) is of two divisions, essential (**dhati**) and attributional (**sifati**). The **ulama** have deemed correct that the essential nobility of the Prophet is linked to his descendants. So, as the Prophetic essence has been set aside for him from all of existence, God has made it a repository for every praiseworthy quality. And it still runs in his folk, the purity within the repository. God has gone to great lengths in the perfection of its purity. Not by work do they manufacture it, nor by pious deeds, but by God's pre-existing effort upon them. As such, the effects of the Prophetic emanation is not known by the greatest of saints who is not of them, even if he expends the greatest effort till eternity. Of this secret, God says: 'Say: No reward do I ask of you except the love of those near of kin.' (**surat al-Shura**) ... So, it is not permitted that a non-**sayyid** marry a **sharifa** even if she waives the kafa'a and consents and her guardian does too, for the right to do so is not theirs. Nobility of essence is not something they gained which they can give away, but belongs to the Prophet and all the sons of Hasan and Husayn, and their consent is inconceivable. And it has been established that they are masters over all other human beings, according to the text of the **hadith**: 'Whomever I was master of, Ali is his master.' And is it permissible that a slave marry his lady/mistress? (Ho 1997: 7)

Ho argues that the *fatwa* is a sign of a more active policy among the Sada to define the boundaries of their identity, and that people of the Sada carry a religious essence that is beyond the will of any individual member of the group. The debate responds to a globalized situation in which local authorities are being challenged by established authorities elsewhere. A second characteristic is that the earlier social world of the Indian Ocean region, characterized by mixing and syncretism, at this historical moment is being replaced by a racialized, imperialist world view. Increased travel,

made possible by the introduction of steamships, brought new groups of people with 'pure' identities, both among the European and the Arab parts of the population, a fact that gave the discourse a different direction.

It was in this context that the Sada developed a new type of genealogy, collected in a work entitled, *Shams al-Zahira al-Dahiyya al-Munira* (*The Luminescent, Encompassing Mid-day Sun*) [sic?], written in 1890 by 'Abd al-Rahman bin Muhammad al-Masshur. The 'mid-day sun' is a metaphor for the bright light of the Sada religious heritage, a metaphor that occurs also in other books written by Hadrami Sada about their own tradition (see Ho 2006). According to Ho (1997, 2006), this important book combined four different things: It set out a comprehensive pattern of descent from the Prophet Mohammed. Within this, it located major family groups and explained the origin of the family names; it provided information about prominent ancestors within each family; and it mentioned the pattern of migration for the different families.

A central registry was set up in Jakarta and the information is kept up-to-date to this day, making this conscious effort on the part of the Sada to define and limit their identity a central element in the maintenance of Sada consciousness. The reason this movement took off in Indonesia, rather than in other parts of the diaspora, can be related to Dutch colonial policies. Generally, Hadramis living in parts of the British-ruled Malay world were better off than those who lived under Dutch rule in Indonesia. The British created mechanisms to administer religious practice. After generations as advisors to Malay sultans, Hadramis were well-positioned to become members of the bureaucracy. By 1914 the *Minhaj al-Talibin*, the standard Shafi'e *fiqh* manual, had been translated into English, and the Hadramis were favoured by the British when they appointed staff.

This was very different from the situation in Indonesia, where the Dutch marginalized the Arabs (Ho 1997; de Jonge 1997). The ability of the Sada group in Indonesia to claim superior status was thus weaker, and members of non-Sada groups could challenge them in this respect. This challenge could also be expressed in the form of counter-*fatwas* to the ones produced by the Sada. An example of this is a *fatwa* written by the Sudanese scholar and teacher Ahmad al-Surketti, who in the early years of the twentieth century wrote—

Verily, most of the people of religions are agreed, without dissent, that the origin of all people is one. And that no one is superior to another by the essence (**dhat**) of his blood and flesh. Rather, they are superior by

virtue of (personal) qualities/attributes and deeds and good upbringing. Just like different fruits taken from one tree, they are preferred (one over the other) for sweetness of taste, largeness of size and lack of rot. So too are people preferred/superior by virtue of knowledge and works and moral character.

The seed which is taken from a small tree will produce a large tree possessing great fruit as a result of good cultivation and effort, surpassing its original in sweetness and grace. In like wise, the seed taken from a great big tree of the same type, its fruit will be small, not sweet, and rotten if it is cultivated badly and effort is not expended upon it.

So too is the situation of the sons of Adam, of the son of every great man. For the son of the generous, learned, excellent/superior, morally upright man could be doltish, cowardly, vile and corrupt if his upbringing is bad. And the son of one who is idiotic, foolish, vile and cowardly, could be generous, brave, excellent, learned and upright if his upbringing is excellent. So, there is no place for conceit on account of descent from one who is generous, learned or one of the prophets. (Ho 1997: 7)

Clearly, the *fatwa* can be read as a reply to the Sada point of view that was quoted above. But the issue of identity was only part of the debate, and soon different organizations were created around the positions expressed in the debates. In 1914, the Jamiyyat al-Islah al-Islamiyya was formed in opposition to the Sada, establishing non-Sada schools and newspapers. The Sada organized themselves in al-Rabita al-Alawiyya. To illustrate that the organizations were now engaged in battles that went beyond the issue of internal identities among Hadramis, it is interesting to note that both organizations competed for support both in the Ottoman court in Istanbul and with the Sharif of Mecca, the Imam of Yemen and the Quaiti and Kathiri sultans at home in Hadramaut (e.g., Kaptein 2014).

HADRAMI HISTORICITY

Hadramis discussed in this paper differ in the way they see their own identities. Clearly, the Sada group maintains a specific identity due to their claimed genealogical relations to the Prophet Mohammed, as do certain Mashaikh groups who claim an ancestor who initiated the specific link of religious learning. For other groups, it is not their genealogical descent but, rather, their activities in the diaspora that are underlined. A new term, *mashaikh bi-l ilm*, emerged, denoting people who obtained religious status not through genealogies but ‘*bi-l ilm*’, through religious knowledge obtained by studies. Masakin and others accumulated wealth and, through

their improved financial status, were better able to challenge the hegemony of the traditionally rich Sada, for instance, through education. Opposition was also based on religious criteria (see vom Bruck 1998, 2005, for such an argument regarding groups in North Yemen).

The basic process here is analysing how the different actors see themselves as ‘becoming persons.’ In doing this, we need to take into consideration how they embrace certain identities and how they themselves relate to the history of their group, their family and their own individual careers.

The religiously orientated Sada, as represented by Tariqa al-Alewia, conceptualize history as being embodied in the actions of their ancestors and thus the product of kinship relationships. History is a kind of kinship reckoning, and the individual’s ‘becoming a person’ is related to the memory of ancestors who belong to the line of the Prophet. Religiously orientated Sada of this kind keep this image of the past alive, in genealogies as well as through pilgrimages to the graves of the important ancestors. A quote from Nietzsche may further illustrate what I mean by this:

[H]istory belongs to the preserving and revering soul—to him who with loyalty and love looks back on his origins; through this reverence, he, as it were, gives thanks for his existence. By tending with loving hands what has long survived he intends to preserve the conditions in which he grew up for those who will come after him—and so he serves life. The possession of ancestral furniture changes its meaning in such a soul: for the soul is rather possessed by the furniture. The small and limited, the decayed and obsolete receives its dignity and inviolability in that the preserving and revering soul of the antiquarian moves into these things and makes itself at home in the nest it builds there. The history of his city becomes for him the history of his self ... And so ... he looks beyond the ephemeral, curious, individual life and feels like the spirit of the house, the generation, and the city. (Nietzsche, F. 1874/1980, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*, quoted in Brenner 1998: 19)

The successful traders of non-Sada descent have no such sense of history, and their genealogical lines are not metaphorically embedded in history. Their focus is more on their own material wealth, such as their residences, which often are new and large and luxurious. Their history is that of traders who became visible through their commodities. Those people who started the activities on which people now depend exist in living memory and are of direct importance for the present. While the notion of the past may also relate to memories of the homeland, these memories often have negative characteristics, focused on those events that led their

forebears to leave. And the homeland is still barren, and has not contributed to present successes. Today's traders are self-made men, their success accomplished through their own deeds. In this way of understanding history, the knowledge that counts is the knowledge needed to be a successful businessman who can create wealth. And those who return to Yemen spend this wealth on Western goods such as four-wheel-drive cars, TVs and modern houses. They make their history felt through capital investments. Whereas the Sada brought religious texts, these people bring commodities. Whereas the religious, literate Sada construct a present through the past, these people create the present in terms of an imagined future. They erase the past, and try to establish a counter-hegemonic history of a future in which economic opportunities can allow their material wealth to grow bigger. Memory is not part of a symbolic heritage. Identity is in the making, not modelled on the past. Migration has allowed them not only to dream about this world but actually to create it.

It is of course risky to define the situation as one whereby two groups, the Sada and the non-Sada, are pitted against each other. The ideological currents I discuss did not divide Hadramis strictly on a group basis. There were spokespersons for most viewpoints in all groups, in the diaspora as well as at home in Hadramaut. Members of the Sada group have developed their careers as traders but they are still Sada. One example is the al-Kaf family. This family, at least as represented through the history discussed here, were major traders in Singapore, maintaining links to the homeland and acting as key reformers there (see Freitag 2002). But several non-Sada families with a history from the more recent migration to the Gulf states and to Saudi Arabia also operate in this manner, and are also reformers at home. Rather than looking for groups, we can look for discourses available among Hadramis, and then examine the extent to which various Hadramis become part of and embrace such discourses. People identify with the past in different ways, and how much they project their identities into the past varies. Many Hadramis are not what they are through ancestral substance, but through knowledge in the present, in contexts of kinship and their knowledge of the 'the world at large'. To such people, their forebears indeed represent an important past, but the past is also characterized by the groups of exploiters, such as the Sada, who made it impossible for their forebears to make a living at home. History is here not understood by the non-Sada as continuity but rather as a transformation that led to their present type of existence. Such differences also influence the claims different people make to a position in

the social and political order. The transformations of such orders in the homeland, as well as in the diaspora, have forced Hadramis to reconsider them. New opportunities are also pursued by members of the groups, and new arguments appear to explain where the different groups 'belong' in such a changing world.

This leads me also to a final conceptual point regarding the link between historicity and historical memory. Memory is not a static category but should rather be taken to be made up of practices that occur in specific historical contexts. Perhaps we should talk about 'remembering' more than 'memory'. This allows for a dynamism that also was initiated by Halbwachs' use of the term 'collective memory' (1980, French original in 1925). He did not differentiate between individual and collective memory as he argued that all remembering is related to social processes and thus occurs within a historical consciousness by which we define our individual and collective selves. In the Hadrami case we see the importance of different social frameworks such as family and genealogical groups, and religious organizations; changing media technologies, such as print and books; cultural institutions such as pilgrimages; political circumstances, such as colonialism; as well as economic circumstances, such as new market opportunities. There are many other, but the ones mentioned above indicate that social frameworks and historical circumstances change over time and, with them, the ways people understand themselves in terms of their past, present and future. The perspective allows us to move from a focus on 'time' to one of 'temporalities', thus again linking up to the dynamic type of analysis we have argued for. In our analysis neither the Hadrami stratification system itself nor the debates about the position of the Sada within it appear as straightforward reflections of a pre-existing 'culture'. Rather, they appear as 'imaginings' that are shaped by what categories people and groups employ to make sense of their lives and their social, cultural and political attachments. Hence I conclude by arguing that history is not only the acting out of certain basic cultural schemas. People are also influenced by politics and power when positioning themselves in these schemas. The maintenance of Hadraminess is not so much dependent on agreement about cultural schemas, as it is on people's willingness to engage in the discourses relating to the understanding of being Hadrami. Such a reflexive engagement also engenders awareness of one's own identity.

Through their practices, as explored above, we can say that the Sada have 'negotiated the duration of time' in a way that presents their social positions and identities as being timeless. At the same time, members of

the non-Sada groups have engaged in modern activities that challenge the Sada representation of history. With a growing number of non-Sada migrating outside Yemen, a battle over group identities has emerged. Over and above such struggles, however, are rituals that provide what all rituals do—repetition, formalization and fixing experience in time. As Muslims, Hadramis engage in Muslim rituals, and we have seen how the Sada, and members of Tariqa al-Alewia, play important roles here, in terms of ongoing activities, but also as apical ancestors around whom rituals such as *hawlia* are organized. There is thus a constant tension between Hadramis in everyday affairs and Hadramis as participants in cultural traditions. The Sada seem to stand at the centre of this tension; a tension that revolves around a transformation of their position from one of power to one of rank. This means that their position is ritualized, taken out of history and given a rigid, essentialized meaning that cannot be questioned.

Looking at the history of the Hadrami people, it must be said that this strategy of Sada identity formation has been very successful. But if our focus is on specific moments in history, we also see that the success is being challenged. And in such moments of challenge, we see how the earlier successes of the Sada, and the way they have built up an ideological justification for their position within the social hierarchy, can limit the flexibility of discourse about the various identities available to them. This was apparent when their status was challenged by the new groups whose members emerged through nationalism and market relationships as ‘self-made men’ in the diaspora, or as new landowners, as was the case back in Hadramaut.

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Remembering Home: Christians, Muslims and the Outside World in Late-Ottoman Cilicia and Cappadocia

Mogens Pelt

This chapter focuses on the Greek Orthodox Christians in Cappadocia and Cilicia from the late eighteenth century to the end of the Greek-Turkish war (1919–1922) and the exchange of populations between the two countries in 1923. Focusing on Cappadocia on the one hand and Cilicia on the other provides an opportunity to compare two different types of Ottoman worlds: Cappadocia represents a more traditional nationstate to Cilicia, whose main towns from the last quarter of the nineteenth century experienced a rapid expansion of urban life, business and immigration.

The chapter examines how the Greek Orthodox Christians who arrived in Greece as a consequence of the exchange of populations remembered their homelands, and how they understood and handled the transformations of the Ottoman Empire. The discussion is motivated, in the words of Nicholas Doumanis, by the belief that these Greeks offer qualitative assessments of the ground-level effects of state power and interstate power plays, and the extent to which these effects politicized, nationalized and thereby modernized the peoples affected.¹

In selecting which specific villages and towns to focus on, we shall follow in the footsteps of the Greek Orthodox businessman Prodromos

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Bodosakis Athanasiadis. Bodosakis was born in Bor, Cappadocia, around 1890 and died in Athens in 1979. He lived the first three decades of his life in the Ottoman Empire. During the First World War he played a prominent role as the main supplier of foodstuff to the Ottoman army and the construction sites of the Berlin–Baghdad Railway. Although in this capacity he provides a clear exception, by studying how he made his way through times of radical change and in what manner this shaped his dealings with his Christian and Muslim compatriots as well as with the Ottoman authorities we should get a more general understanding of what it meant to be a Greek Orthodox subject in the Ottoman Empire.

Apart from his published memoirs, my main sources are provided by Greek Orthodox refugees. The records are kept in the Centre for Asia Minor Studies in Athens, and comprise the work of more than 100 researchers, who collected oral testimonies from 5000 first-generation refugees from all parts of Asia Minor. They provided their recollections decades after their arrival in Greece; and a certain degree of nostalgia may have influenced their memories, because many were left with a very strong sense of loss. But this should not distract us from the fact that their accounts concern the social reality of an inter-communal life—a life which moreover would seem strange and unimaginable to generations raised and educated within the matrix of the nation-state.² I concur with Nicholas Doumanis that their recollections represent a unique source for understanding a collective experience, and that insights into this realm of consciousness are very difficult to find elsewhere.³

Two main trends affected the lives of the Greek Orthodox minority. One entailed a significant amelioration of the minorities' official status as a consequence of the Tanzimat reforms (1839–1876). The Imperial Edict (*Hatt-i hümayun*) of 1856 officially made all Ottoman subjects equal before the law and was intended to reorganize the existing multi-confessional society into one based on a single, shared Ottoman citizenship. This process involved the emergence of a self-confident Greek Orthodox business class that rose in prominence in tandem with the improvement of their political status and with the integration of the Empire into the world market, whose extraordinary expansion from the 1850s onwards has been compared to the globalization that took place in the late twentieth century.⁴

The other trend involved ad hoc hostile reactions from Muslims, who saw the reforms as an encroachment on their former privileged position. After the Young Turk revolution in 1908 and, in particular, in the wake of

defeat in the Balkan Wars (1912–1913), in addition to the entrance of the Ottoman Empire into the First World War, it took the shape of systematic efforts, with an increasingly nationalist tone, on the part of the central government to undermine the position of the Greek Orthodox and carry out a *Turkification* of Anatolia by means of economic boycotts, deportations and persecutions.⁵

To comprehend how the Greek Orthodox minority understood these changes, we will examine their recollections of their relations with the local Muslims and the Ottoman authorities, how they saw their own locality vis-à-vis the outside world and, not least, which qualities they ascribed to their homeland. It should be mentioned that in everyday language, the Greek Orthodox would normally define themselves as ‘Romioi’, that is, (East) Romans—‘Rum’ in Turkish—or sometimes simply ‘Christians’, while they would normally call the Turkish-speaking Muslims ‘Turks’. The terms *Greek Orthodox* and *Muslims* will be used unless they are part of a quotation. This is because these two terms best reflect the identities that continued to matter in the late Ottoman Empire, as confession remained the most important marker for the authorities and in terms of the self-definition of the communities as well as their understanding of other communities.

This chapter will draw on Bodosakis’ narrative as well as the perspectives of other Cappadocian and Cilician Greek Orthodox subjects of the time to navigate through the turbulent period that marked the end of the Ottoman Empire and the emergence of Near Eastern nationalisms.

BOR: A PARAGON OF INTERCOMMUNALITY

According to local legend, Bor was founded sometime between 1724 and 1774 by Greek Orthodox settlers who had moved from the village of Kai (one hour west of Bor).⁶ It was a place of a few thousand Greek Orthodox souls living among 5000–7000 Muslims.⁷ Most Greek Orthodox testimonies claim that in economic terms they fared better than the Muslims: they owned more land and were innovative regarding new means of production of liquor and carpets, among other products. Some were travelling peddlers, whose travels brought them into contact with dwellers on the plain of Cilicia and even inhabitants of faraway Aleppo and Cyprus.⁸

In Bor, Bodosakis grew up in a Turcophone environment and was Turkish-speaking himself. Hybridization seems to have been the order of the day. According to one witness, the Muslims honoured Christianity to

the point that they almost seem to have been of this faith. Every year on Holy Thursday, many Muslims came to the church because they believed that they would thereby not fall ill or that they would be healed. Another witness relates that on Holy Thursday the Muslims would put salt in empty wheat sacks and take them to the church to have them blessed. They would then bring them back to their houses and spread the salt in the basement to bless the dwelling.⁹ Bodosakis mentions that his parents made the trip to the Holy Shrines in Palestine and to the River Jordan. This clearly earned them considerable respect among locals—Christians and Muslims alike—who began to address his father, Thomas, by the honourable title ‘Hadji’ (pilgrim). Thomas Athanasiadis, in turn, took pride in this and began to call himself Hadji Thomas, naming the company he later founded in Mersin ‘Hatzithomas Athanasiadis and Sons’.¹⁰

Regarding relations between Greek Orthodox and Muslims, Bodosakis’ contemporaries would usually answer, ‘We got along well with the Turks’; ‘They loved us’; or, according to one witness, ‘We called each other twin brother’. The same recollections also reveal that local Greek Orthodox believed it was due to the Imperial Edict that their position had improved significantly: ‘Before 1856 we were the slaves of the Turks—now the Turks are our slaves’¹¹ was a common expression. Some maintain that this process began as early as 1839—viz., immediately after the Rose Garden Edict (*Hatt-i sharif* of Gülhane), which initiated the Tanzimat period—while most sources agree that before the reforms, the Greek Orthodox subjects lived in a state of fear and oppression.¹²

In Bor the turning point in the relations between Christians and Muslims was related to the so-called Kamalak Controversy (named after one of the victims of the riot that spawned the controversy, Evstratios Kamalak). According to one witness, in the wake of the Crimean War of 1853–1856, when Muslim refugees were arriving from Caucasus, the district governor (kaymakam) decided to convene the notables of the town, including two Christians, Evstratios Kamalak and another Greek Orthodox notable. It was a Friday, and the Muslims of Bor were notorious for their ‘yiynak’—a custom practised only in Bor. Immediately after Friday prayers, people would leave the mosque in a procession led by a drummer and pass through the Christian quarter. Anybody who happened to be in their way would receive a beating. For that reason, the two Christians requested of the kaymakam to be excused from attending the meeting, but he insisted, guaranteeing their safety. After this meeting, the two Christians left to go home but on their way heard the procession and

ran to hide by the river. However, they were discovered and beaten half-dead by the mob. Their families complained to the authorities, and the kaymakam submitted a report to the sultan.¹³

The gist of the report was that the ordinary Muslims of Bor were treating the Christians as if they were still second-class subjects, but that times had changed, that the Christians now had rights and that there existed laws that forced the authorities take action on complaints from the Christians. The sultan's reply was delivered by a whole company of soldiers, and stated that every single house belonging to Muslims would be burned down and all Muslim males killed. The sultan, the account claims, feared Russian reprisals should he not take immediate action to set an example and send an unambiguous message to the more fanatic Muslims.¹⁴ The Christians of Bor found the decree harsh, and implored the authorities to punish only those who were guilty of the *yiynak*. Their petition swayed the sultan, and at the end of the day only four empty houses, in each of the corners of Bor, were destroyed by artillery fire, while 20 men were exiled to Istanbul and Edirne.¹⁵

According to another version of the same event, the Kamalak Controversy was the result of a reaction to the Imperial Edict of 1856, by which the sultan declared equal rights for Christians and Muslims before the law. When Bor's inhabitants learned of the sultan's *firman*, a minor incident in the market between Grigorios Kamalak and one of his friends and some Muslims resulted in the two Greek Orthodox being beaten almost to death. When Kamalak recovered from his injuries, after having been bedridden for almost a month, he decided to bring the incident to the attention of the sultan. Thereafter, the details of the story follow the one above.¹⁶

Both accounts tell the story of how harmony was achieved between the Greek Orthodox and the Muslims after the sultan's declaration of the controversial Imperial Edict. They also credit the sultan for keeping his word, but the thrust of the story is that it was the intervention by the local Greek Orthodox on behalf of the Muslims, their fellow Bor villagers, that persuaded the sultan to show clemency. In this way, the good relations between Bor Muslims and Christians were represented as a local achievement.

The Kamalak Controversy must, however, also be seen as a reflection of the Empire-wide resistance to the 1856 Imperial Edict, and as just one link in a chain of events. Indeed, it could be argued that the way in which the Ottoman authorities handled the Kamalak Controversy, as well

as their motives for doing so, was comparable to their reaction to riots in other parts of the Empire. As an example of this, in order to forestall the Europeans' taking action in the wake of similar riots in the province of Syria in the 1860s, the Ottomans set up military tribunals to mete out severe punishment for those responsible for the riots. The Governor of Damascus was sentenced to death, while dozens of Muslims from all parts of society were publicly hanged and hundreds of Damascenes exiled.¹⁷

THE NEW WORLD OF CILICIA

Bodosakis' account contains no details of these events, but he was also only around seven or eight years old when his family left Bor, following in the footsteps of many Cappadocians who aspired to make their way up the social ladder. While some departed for Alexandria, Athens, Cairo, Istanbul, Izmir—and America—Bodosakis' father decided on Mersin.¹⁸

The testimony of a local inhabitant suggests that only the Muslims left Bor, with the exception of a few Greek Orthodox families were not thriving economically there. Although this was the case with Bodosakis' father, who had learned the occupation of gardening in Istanbul but never succeeded in practising his skills in Bor profitably,¹⁹ this suggestion should be viewed with a degree of scepticism—it was perhaps simply an expression of pride by his fellow Greek Orthodox villagers. Rather than reflecting personal failure, it was the lure of jobs and business opportunities in the thriving coastal towns of Asia Minor that made people from all parts of the Empire migrate there.

Cilicia, together with the provinces around the port of Izmir, was the most dynamic area of Ottoman Anatolia. Rich soil and a constant water supply made the region the most agriculturally productive in the whole of Anatolia, to such a degree that this had political and strategic significance. During the First World War, the region was a source of flour for the Ottoman armies in Palestine and Mesopotamia, and of cereal for Germany. Conditions on the plain of Adana were not unlike those of the Nile basin, providing an excellent environment for the growing of cotton. Cotton was the 'white gold' of Cilicia, and an important component in the economic development of the area and its social transformation.²⁰ Mersin, as a most indicative example of this trend, changed from an insignificant backwater into a commercial hub within less than two generations while all its major coastal towns fostered an emerging industry. The factories in Tarsus, according to one witness, were so numerous that they left a distinct mark

on daily life: 'In the morning, when the workers went to work, the roads would jam and the traffic stopped because carts and animals could not move an inch. In the evening the streets roared with thunder and dust rose when the workmen, after a long day, beat the pavement with their heavy steps'.²¹ Some Greek Orthodox inhabitants also took pride in pointing out that Adana was 'the most industrialized city in Turkey'. According to one such account, there were 14 factories; most of them, it was further claimed, had Greek Orthodox owners.²²

The overwhelming majority of Cilicia's Greek Orthodox population were recent arrivals—only 2000 out of an estimated total of 12,000 were locals. The newcomers were rich and powerful and constituted the majority of notables of Adana, Tarsus and Mersin.²³ Mersin was a place of only a few small huts until 1841, when immigration began to gather pace; in Ottoman government records, this date is cited as the year of its founding. According to Greek sources, it was a Greek Orthodox from Cappadocia who founded the city in 1825, while French sources date the founding to 1836. Whatever the case, it is a fact that among the early settlers were Alawis from the north of Syria (often mentioned as *Fellahin*, i.e., 'peasants' in Arabic); Greek Orthodox emigrants from Cappadocia and the Aegean islands; and people of other religions and denominations from Levantine towns and cities such as Beirut, Haifa, Tripoli, Damascus, Aleppo, Idlib and Latakia. In addition to these newcomers, there were some Circassians and Armenians who had always lived in the region, as well as Muslims from surrounding villages and cities. Refugees were also numerous among the newcomers: the Crimean War generated waves of migration to Cilicia and settlement in Mersin. The same is true for the 1860 clashes between Christians and Muslims around Beirut and massacres in Damascus the same year, which precipitated the arrival of a substantial number of Maronites.²⁴ Around 1908–1909, the town of Mersin had a population of about 15,000, of whom 3000–4000 were Greek Orthodox. Most were from Cyprus or Chios. Some were from Smyrna and Caesarea (Kayseri). The everyday language of Mersin was Turkish but Arabic was used too, while the Greek Orthodox used Greek and Turkish.²⁵

According to Alexandra Prezani, the 'Greek element' had the highest position, and, 'We did as it pleased us. We did not care about the Turks'. Such was the situation, she said, until the end of the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II, who lost his power to the constitutional system set up by the Young Turk revolution in 1908, and was dethroned the following year as a result of his abortive counter-revolution in 1909.²⁶ When referring

to the ‘Turks’ in this way, Prezani probably had the ordinary Muslims in mind. If she by ‘Turks’ means the Ottoman authorities, her statement may represent an exaggerated self-importance on behalf of the wealthy Greek Orthodox in Mersin mixed with a touch of nostalgia for the Hamidian period—the belle époque in many refugee accounts—because from a British Consular Report of 1896 it appears that the Greek Orthodox businessmen were very careful not to upset the Ottoman authorities.²⁷ In this way, her statement probably also reflects a certain degree of class-consciousness, because, after all, she was the daughter of Antonios Mavrommatis, a scion of one of the wealthiest Greek Orthodox families in Cilicia.²⁸ Mavrommatis was a regional business tycoon, the Russian consul and a generous benefactor of the Greek Orthodox community in Mersin. Benefactors played a significant role in establishing and maintaining institutions to create and develop social cohesion among the Greek Orthodox, to increase their economic power and to promote education in the community. In Mersin and its surroundings it was the Mavrommatis family who undertook the upkeep of the two schools, the elementary school in Hristianköy and the eighth-grade boys’ school in Mersin where French and Turkish were taught in addition to the Greek curriculum.²⁹

The Bodosakis family were among the many Mersin immigrants. Prodomos’ father soon established a grocery store there and later a flour mill within the framework of his company: Hadjithomas Athanasiadis and Sons.³⁰ Bodosakis began his first own business activities while still a school-boy when one of his teachers, who, in order to contribute to the economic support of his pupil, supplied him with various proto-mass culture products to sell in the local Greek Orthodox community. These articles, mainly woodcuts and pamphlets celebrating various events in the Greek War of Independence and its national heroes, were ordered from Athens. It must have been quite a good business, for when the teacher was appointed to a new position away from Mersin, Bodosakis contacted the publishing house and arranged to take over the ordering.³¹ In this way, Bodosakis must have become acquainted with a number of symbols and artefacts of modern secular Greek identity and gained an understanding that the values imbued in them were highly valued by his fellow Greek Orthodox.

In this way, one could say that his childhood business venture was stimulated by a demand created by the efforts of the national centre in Athens and by strong cultural institutions in Istanbul to hellenize the Greek Orthodox of Asia Minor. At the same time, it appears from other sources that exact knowledge about the Greek Kingdom was both very limited and

vague, at least among Cappadocians, judging from the following: ‘We did not know much about the Greek Revolution, except from the learned ones. We somehow regarded ourselves as cut off from the national body. We regarded this as something fate had decided’.³² While the Greek nation-state seems to have been a distant and hazy idea, Russia was present and closer to the minds of some Greek Orthodox: ‘We referred to the last Russo–Turkish War [1877–1878] with emotion’, another respondent from Cappadocia stated. ‘It is to its fortunate result [the war] we owe the improvement of our life. Holy Russia saved us’.³³ It is noteworthy that Russian support of Bulgarian nationalism, which ran counter to the interests of the Greek nation-state and the Patriarchate, was nowhere evident in the accounts mentioned above. This may be so because the Cappadocians continued to identify with an imagination that was strongly influenced by the high degree of homogenisation with their Turkish-speaking Muslim compatriots that had developed and still remained rather unaffected by the impact of nationalism. A different situation obtained in Cilicia. The province was located in the linguistic borderland between Turcophone and Arab-speakers that ran somewhere between the vilayets of Adana and Aleppo. While Mersin, Tarsus and Adana, in addition to Turcophones and Grecophones, all had Arab-speaking Greek Orthodox, just south of Adana, in Karatash, most of the Greek Orthodox were Arab-speakers.³⁴ All this together meant that Cilicia was beginning to respond to the impact of the national idea.

NATIONALISM AND NEW FAULT LINES: GREEK VERSUS ARAB ORTHODOX

What agitated the Greek Orthodox in Mersin far more when Bodosakis arrived was the issue of the Patriarch of Antioch appointing Arab-speaking bishops there. The ensuing controversy was the apex of a long quarrel within the Orthodox Church. The whole affair had become inflammatory around the time of the establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate in the 1870s and reached international dimensions in the 1890s, when Russia, Greece and Britain became involved. It was not solved until around 1910. The idea took the shape of an intra-millet (i.e., non-Muslim) controversy with some proto-nationalist lines of demarcation, not unlike the issue of the Bulgarian Exarchate. According to an Arab publication, *Account of the Crisis of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch* (1899), the Greek War of

Independence (1821–1828) had disturbed the equilibrium of the Church of Antioch. Its leaders claimed that the war had emphasized the differences in nationality between the Greek Patriarch and his Arab flock and that the Arabs no longer regarded the Greek prelates as fellow Ottomans, but as strangers and enemies of the state.³⁵ This was a public opinion issue of considerable regional significance. As late as 1911, the question constantly appeared under the heading ‘Orthodox Affairs’ in the Arab-language newspaper *Falastin* (Palestine), where it was framed as a struggle of the Arab Orthodox to free their Church from the domination of the Greek higher clergy. It figured prominently, along with other major issues, such as opposition to Zionism.³⁶

Regarding the mood among the Greek Orthodox in Mersin, Anastasios Andreadis spoke of how the Arab Patriarchate in Antioch had sent an Arab Orthodox to Mersin, where he was to be appointed bishop. The Greek Orthodox reacted immediately, receiving him with a volley of rotten eggs and tomatoes, forcing him to leave before he was invested. Andreadis believed that Russia was behind it all, *inter alia* attempting to introduce Russian language in the schools. St. Petersburg was also said to have laid claim to land belonging to the Sinai monastery under the Patriarchate in Jerusalem. All of this caused a major conflict, with repercussions throughout Anatolia, including, among other things, the arrival of a group of 500 Greek Orthodox from Smyrna, said to have been determined to go to Palestine to fight a ‘civil war’ against the Arabs. However, Andreadis was also of the opinion that the Russian consul Mavrommatis was secretly against the appointment of the Arab Orthodox bishop.

There exists another version of the same event that indicates that the chasm also divided the Orthodox community of Mersin which goes as follows: Neither Mersin, nor the rest of Cilicia, had had a bishop since the death of Bishop Germanos (circa 1899). When he died, the Mavrommatis and Dikiardopoulos families clashed. Antonios Mavrommatis’ mother was said to be Arab Orthodox. For that reason, Antonios asked an Arab Orthodox from Beirut to come to Mersin as bishop, something which the local Greek Orthodox would not accept. Therefore, those in the flock who wanted to see him had to do so in secrecy, and they went to kiss his hand at the bishop’s home. One day, the wives of two doctors went to his house, at which they commenced to throw rotten eggs and tomatoes. At the end of the day, they chased the bishop back to the same boat which had brought him to Mersin.³⁷

The main difference between these two versions is that the first one frames the controversy as the result of Great Power machinations, as something caused by forces outside the Greek Orthodox community. At the same time, it attempts to establish some kind of harmony among the Greek Orthodox of Mersin, claiming that Mavrommatis was protesting secretly to the Russians. The other one shows no reluctance to lay bare the fissures in the Greek Orthodox community of Mersin, questioning the loyalty of Mavrommatis by highlighting the fact that his mother was an Arab Orthodox. But we should note that the harmony version concerns intra-Greek Orthodox affairs, which makes it different to the moral of the *yiynak* story from Bor, where the harmony encompassed the entire community there, including the Muslims. Perhaps this feature is emblematic of the difference between Bor and Mersin. The first was a village with a rather long history of social stability, where homogenisation was the order of the day. In contrast, Mersin was a new, modern city created by the pull of potential employment and the business opportunities it offered, which in turn meant that most of the Greek Orthodox were newcomers with no history of social intercourse with the Muslims of Mersin.

THE 1909 ADANA MASSACRES

Cilicia was also the scene of Muslims pitted against Christians—in particular against Armenians—a conflict that culminated in massacres. These took place at the time of the 1909 counter-revolution. According to Donald Bloxham, as many as 20,000 Armenians were killed in some 200 villages in Cilicia, while up to 2000 Muslims were killed by Armenians.³⁸ The 1909 massacres also left their mark on the recollections of the Greek Orthodox population. A Greek Orthodox from Tarsus recalled that during the massacres many *Fellahin* (Alawis who had migrated from the north of Syria) helped the Christians, and that he personally was saved by a *Fellahin* named Yusif Effendi.³⁹

Regarding Mersin, Alexandra Prezani said that at the time of the ‘slaughter of the Armenians’, it was the district governor and her father, Antonios Mavrommatis, who saved them all. Another witness from Mersin, Evripidi Kiriapoulou, stated, ‘We were very reserved in our relations to the Turks. We were afraid of them. They never greeted us. They were evildoers. That is why they slaughtered the Armenians’. Nevertheless, she went on to say that her family had some good Turkish friends. One was Hadjibey, who was very rich. ‘It was he’, she explained, ‘who warned my father about what

had happened in Adana and he advised my father to escape. Everybody went to the house of Mavrommatis—all the good people. Then came the Turks to commit massacres. However, Mavrommatis, Hadjibey and Mazarakis kicked them out'. It is not quite clear how they accomplished this. Perhaps 'the Turks' referred to were from militias with no formal authority, which would have made it easier to defy them. In any event, nobody was harmed, and Kiriapoulou concluded, 'The Turks of Mersin were cultivated people. In Adana and Tarsus they were barbarians'.⁴⁰

Here, evaluations of the Muslims are more ambivalent than those we find in Bor. On the one hand, they maintain that the Greek Orthodox of Mersin—in contrast to those of Bor—had little social interaction with the Muslims. At the same time, they also indicate that Christian and Muslim notables in Mersin were willing to work together when defence of their town against intruders was imperative, as in the situation when the Muslims came to kill the Armenians. This emphasis on cooperation, in turn, made it possible for them to claim that Mersin was different from Adana and Tarsus, where, according to the same accounts, the Muslims were barbarians and conditions for cooperation were absent. This indicates a certain pride on the part of the Greek Orthodox narrators of Mersin, perhaps even a modicum of local patriotism.

BODOSAKIS BETWEEN BOYCOTTS AND DEPORTATIONS

After the Adana massacres came the first economic boycotts directed against the Greek Orthodox, beginning in 1909 with crisis of Crete. Between 1909 and 1911, the west coast of Asia Minor was periodically boycotted, culminating in the first half of 1914 when large numbers of Greek Orthodox were compelled to seek refuge on the nearby islands as a result of ethnic cleansing perpetrated by local Muslim peasants and refugees organized in semi-official bands.⁴¹ At the same time, the Ottoman authorities were planning large-scale deportations of Greek Orthodox inhabitants of the same area.⁴²

Bodosakis' life became increasingly difficult around 1912. The immediate cause, he claims, was a drought, which destroyed the harvest and pushed Bodosakis to the brink of insolvency.

Nevertheless, Bodosakis was soon to discover that many people whom he considered friends had actively attempted to bring him down. Bitterly hurt by all this, he decided to leave Mersin, setting off in the autumn of 1913 determined to emigrate to the United States.⁴³ Although he wrote

that disgust at this betrayal was the reason for his decision to leave, we should not forget that the first economic boycotts directed against the Greek Orthodox had begun at that time.⁴⁴

At the end of the day Bodosakis did not, in fact, emigrate. He got as far as Naples, Italy, but his application for immigration to the United States was rejected for health reasons. At that juncture, he decided to return to Mersin, apparently not giving any serious thought to settling in Greece despite the fact that he passed Athens en route to Naples and found the city in a state of great excitement, celebrating its victory and substantial gains in the Balkan Wars. However, with no connections in Greece and having been denied entry to America, he went back to Mersin.⁴⁵ The importance of connections and the lack of contacts in Greece also kept other Greek Orthodox from going there in times of crisis. This was the case even around 1920, when it was feared that the French authorities would terminate their occupation of Cilicia and hand it over to the Turkish nationalists. 'All the rich ones fled. They left their belongings behind and took their money with them and went to Smyrna', one account states. 'Some also decided for Constantinople, but they did not want to go to Athens'.⁴⁶

The fact that Bodosakis' return to Mersin coincided with the outbreak of the First World War made his position even more precarious, because the war put the Greek Orthodox of Cilicia in a state of permanent danger. It was the risk of being conscripted into the army, which constituted an omnipresent threat. In 1914 Bodosakis was ordered to report to a military unit in Tarsus, but an Armenian friend of his who ran a hotel in the town helped, by means of a handsome bribe, to get him declared unfit for service. In this way he believed he had escaped 'certain death', as, according to Bodosakis, not a single one of the conscripts returned alive.⁴⁷ The danger he had just escaped was being assigned to one of the notorious labour battalions, *Amele Taburlari*, that were deliberately organized to decimate the Greek Orthodox and Armenians.⁴⁸

BODOSAKIS WORKING FOR THE OTTOMAN ARMY

The war also meant business and the re-inclusion of some Christians in the national economy as the Ottoman authorities co-opted all the local industries of Cilicia in the war economy. Until then, they had had a hard time competing with foreign companies, because the latter were protected by capitulations.⁴⁹ However, now the locals industries began to thrive, thanks

to new or increased orders placed by the army and the state. It seems that the authorities were indifferent to the religion of business owners, as it is mentioned that a company run by a Bosnian refugee and 'fanatical Muslim' supported by the Young Turks lost out to other local companies. The factories were operating 24 hours a day, with two 12-hour shifts, and were placed under military control and discipline. All engineers, technicians and workers were ordered not to leave the immediate area, while Ottoman officers were stationed at the sites to ensure that orders were followed.⁵⁰

While war production saved many Christians, including Armenians, from being conscripted into the dreaded labour battalions,⁵¹ the suspicion of fifth-column activities continued to keep them in a vulnerable position. In Bodosakis' case, this turned into a mortal danger when, in the beginning of 1915, the owner of a watermill in Mersin, a Mufti, accused Bodosakis of espionage. He claimed that after dark, Bodosakis climbed to the top of his mill, from where he flashed a torch to guide Entente warships through the bay of Mersin. The absurdity of these accusations, according to Bodosakis, was demonstrated by the fact that it was impossible to see the sea from the top of the mill. Although the Ottoman authorities decided to bring him before the so-called Special Security Council in Adana, his case was treated in a lenient manner, and it was decided that he should remain in Adana but be placed under police observation. It was also understood that the alternative was Erzurum. In this context, Erzurum had only one meaning: the notorious forced-labour camp, where thousands of Greek Orthodox were sent and never returned. Bodosakis had to remain some three months in Adana until benign intervention on the part of the police director allowed him to leave.

Coming back to Mersin, Bodosakis found the family business in sorry shape. The precarious state of their personal security as Greek Orthodox citizens seems to have made his father and brothers decide to close the watermill. They feared their Muslim competitors and also knew that the authorities were all too ready to use harsh means to facilitate their rivals' taking over the economic functions of the Greek Orthodox in order to accomplish the ultimate goal of creating a Muslim bourgeoisie. Bodosakis was not easy to scare. When he understood that his father and brothers refused to expand the business in other directions, he decided to withdraw and start his own company; and three months later, when Hadjithomas and Sons had gone bankrupt, his father's creditors came to Bodosakis suggesting that he take over the management and reopen the firm. In other

words, business interests trumped ideology: while his brothers and father had succumbed to the fear generated by the anti-Greek sentiment and had thereby gone bankrupt, the creditors seemingly preferred Bodosakis, another Greek Orthodox, to a non-Greek Orthodox.

Although Bodosakis was more daring than his father and brothers, he was only too aware of the dangers he was exposed to as a Greek Orthodox. He had already had some personal experience on that account, while at the same time managing to steer clear of some of the most potentially fatal traps: conscription and being convicted of treason. However, his public behaviour indicates that he was cautious. He avoided discussing the war, and generally kept a low profile in order not to be perceived, and condemned, as being too engaged in its course. In spite of such precautions, he never felt completely safe, and for that reason it came as quite a nasty surprise when one day a colonel from the Ottoman army turned up at his office. The colonel immediately understood that Bodosakis was scared but managed to reassure him, telling that he was in charge of the logistics division and that he had only come to learn if Bodosakis would be interested in grinding some 500 tons of wheat kept in a storage room at his unit. Bodosakis immediately accepted, without knowing the exact conditions. It constituted the largest order he had ever received. At the same time, the whole business made him fear for his life, for he was certain that an officer of the Ottoman army would normally never hesitate put the blame on a supplier like Bodosakis—an unprotected Greek Orthodox—to save himself if something went wrong. Therefore, it was of the utmost importance, Bodosakis recalled, to follow the terms of the agreement completely and appear trustworthy, rather than prioritizing profit.⁵²

Later, the officer returned. This time he did not scare Bodosakis, but left him flabbergasted when he suggested that Bodosakis buy 200 tons of flour from him but only pay for half the amount. The reason was that large surpluses of flour had accumulated at the base, and the officer wanted to be rid of these before someone came to take stock at the warehouse. Bodosakis first hesitated. If he accepted the deal, he ran the risk of exposing himself as a fence; and if he did not, the officer might well decide to get rid of him to make sure he would never denounce him. In the end, Bodosakis decided to tell the officer that he would take the whole 200 tons but insist on paying the full price. The officer was astonished, but then enthusiastic. In return he decided to offer Bodosakis an order for no less than 1000 tons of wheat to be grinded. He also promised Bodosakis that he would ensure that all the other units of his division commissioned him to grind

their grain. And he kept his word, for soon Bodosakis was entrusted with this job for all the region's units. Now Bodosakis had to expand his capacity, and soon rented a flourmill in nearby Tarsus.

From grain, Bodosakis moved into the cattle business when he won a tender for 12,000 tons of beef. It was a huge task, and he knew he would never find so many cattle in the Mersin area. He therefore set up a network of representatives along the southern coast of Anatolia and its immediate hinterland in the regions of Seleufkia, Karaman and Antalya to purchase cattle and drive them to Mersin. By the end of the war, Bodosakis had provided the Ottoman Army and Baghdad Railway with more than 160,000 tons of meat. As a result of this success, he was given the opportunity to supply the construction sites of the Baghdad Railway in Cilicia. The project was a large undertaking, involving, among other things, tunnelling through mountains and laying the rails that one day would connect Berlin and the lands of Mesopotamia. The whole supply chain was organized along military lines. It was headed by Cemal Pasha, a leading member of the triumvirate which governed the Ottoman Empire, and commander of the Fourth Army, which was deployed on the fronts in Palestine and Mesopotamia. The workers were conscripts doing their military service.

The Ottoman and German authorities held Bodosakis in high esteem, trusting his integrity and judgement. By virtue of his esteemed position, according to his own account, he also managed to save thousands of Greek Orthodox from extermination. As all those who worked on the railway or in his supply teams were conscripts, Bodosakis had the opportunity to employ people who otherwise would have been assigned to service in military units. For the Greek Orthodox, these units would probably have been the notorious labour battalions.⁵³ According to figures from the Greek Patriarchate in 1919, of a total 774,235 Greek Orthodox deported, 3650 were from the districts of Adana and Tarsus.⁵⁴ This is a remarkably low number, and if we bear in mind that Bodosakis employed around 30,000 men,⁵⁵ it substantiates his claim that the considerable orders he received indeed helped save thousands of Greek Orthodox citizens from this fate. Bodosakis' actions also fit well with the line which the Baghdad Railway Company took in relation to the Armenian deportees when the company hired tens of thousands for its construction sites in Cilicia.⁵⁶

It was Bodosakis' reputation as an efficient and reliable supplier that caught the attention of people at the highest level in the Ottoman

government. Sometime around 1916, Bodosakis was commissioned to secure the supply of grain to the whole of Cilicia, and as a result of his successful operations, one day in 1917 he was summoned to the Adana railway station, where Enver Pasha personally decorated him with the Iron Cross, the highest Ottoman war medal. He was the only Greek Orthodox ever to receive such an honour.⁵⁷ Even such official recognition did not, however, make Bodosakis immune from attempts to exploit his precarious status as a Greek Orthodox in order to extort money. In 1918 an Ottoman military man, whom Bodosakis refers to as General Bahaettin, decided to hold Bodosakis responsible for the escape of seven British prisoners of war from a camp in faraway Erzurum, where Bahaettin operated. The person in question was probably the notorious Dr. Bahaeddin Şakir, a central figure in the Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa (Special Organization), which played a prominent role in the genocide of the Ottoman Armenians, and a man with extensive experience of looting.⁵⁸ It is clear that Bodosakis was facing a formidable enemy, for among his Ottoman protectors even the well-connected Vali of Adana, Cevdet Bey, who was the brother-in-law of Enver, advised Bodosakis to seek a compromise. In the end, Bodosakis agreed to pay Bahaettin 300,000 pounds to be rid of him.⁵⁹ The whole matter had, naturally enough, upset Bodosakis, and it was against this background that he decided to go to Istanbul. The war had made him a very rich man, and he soon bought the Pera Palas Hotel, the most prestigious hotel in the city. It was also there he would forge his first connections to the Greek political world until he finally settled permanently in Greece in November 1923.

Bodosakis' experience confirms the other accounts from Cilicia, which maintain that the lives and welfare of the Greek Orthodox became increasingly threatened from around 1908. Bodosakis' decision to leave Mersin dates to around the time of the Balkan Wars, and it is clear that he felt his personal security endangered after the outbreak of the First World War.

At the same time it is also evident that the effects of the policies directed against the Christian minorities varied and were dependent on the needs of the Ottoman war economy, on local condition, and personal relations, which enabled Greek Orthodox contractors like Bodosakis to save Greeks and Armenians from deportation. Bodosakis' exceptional experience can be explained by his personal qualities as a businessman, by contingency and by his ability to build strong networks that crossed the boundaries between the Greek Orthodox and Muslim communities and included powerful Ottoman officials and military men.

THE EXPERIENCE OF OTHER GREEK ORTHODOX

That the outlook of the Young Turks vis-à-vis the Greek Orthodox differed noticeably from the attitude of the Ottoman authorities in the Hamidian period, 1876–1908 becomes evident from numerous reports from Bodosakis' world. These suggest that as result of the Young Turk revolution in 1908, a new type of official arrived in their towns and villages. According to numerous other testimonies, as we shall see, these officials attempted to instil a new spirit of group pride in the Muslims and make them distance themselves from their fellow Christian citizens. The cement the Young Turks used in their attempts to strengthen the sense of communality among the Muslims involved a mixture of religion and nationalism. It appears to have been a top-down project to politicize identities.

Papakostis Papadopoulos, from Bor, told of how after the 1908 revolution, hatred was instilled in the local Muslims. It was not something that was in their hearts, he reasoned; but they were afraid of the Young Turks, and then little by little their own interests also began to play a role.⁶⁰ Another villager said that once the Young Turks had come to power, they sent a new kaymakam to Bor—a man from Crete. He immediately prohibited the greeting 'twin brother', a phrase the people of Bor, as mentioned earlier, used when addressing one another. The new kaymakam demanded that they call each other by their Christian and Muslim names—George, Ahmed and so on—to make clear that they were different. According to Papakostis Papadopoulos, the vali of Konya had one day ordered that the mail sacks in Nigde be left unopened until he was present. All Christians and Muslims were ordered to come to the local administration, and a whole crowd arrived. Then came the vali. He ordered that the sacks now be opened and the mail distributed. All the business letters were for Christians, while there was not a single one with a Muslim name on it; for the latter group there was only one newspaper, for a schoolteacher, and two postcards from soldiers to their families. Then the vali rose from his chair in front of the bishop and asked the notables: 'What is our state?'—'Turkish!' was the answer. 'To whom belongs the Mail Service?'—'To the Turkish state!' 'Who benefits from the Mail Service?'—'The Christians and their merchants!' The vali rose again, stood still for a while, and then shouted, 'The Lord be praised that there were a newspaper and the two postcards from the military! Will you go on sleeping—you jackasses? Half the mail [had] better be for you, when it arrives by next year—or

I shall have you hanged!’ And the Turks answered, ‘*Insha’Allah!*’ (‘God willing’).⁶¹

Papadopoulos went on to say, ‘Before the constitution our aghas were jackasses and we used to fool them. We would go to them to borrow money and they would lend us the sum without asking for interests [sic] in return. All you needed was to bring along a small present and offer him a cup of coffee and it would all be fine’.⁶² However, propaganda would slowly begin to change all this. The same informant probably had the efforts to Turkify the economy and boycott the Greek Orthodox in mind when adding, ‘We did not understand it immediately. But, it became obvious when you saw a local Turk going to the market in the company of three thugs armed with clubs. They would force him to buy at the Turks’ stalls only’.⁶³

The reminiscences of Sophocles Fakides and Dim Charalambides elaborate on the same theme. Until 1908 almost all business in Bor was in the hands of the Greek Orthodox and the Armenians, while the Turks pursued very little commerce; and when they did, they mainly sold junk. They were simply ‘fast asleep’ until 1908, when the Young Turks sent a certain Tahir Bey to the village, the Muslims became vitalized and intent on business activities: ‘The rich Turks in Bor founded a company and they began to out-compete us but they were not made for business and soon they failed. The Turks from the countryside kept coming to the Christians’ shops in secrecy because our goods were better. But the Young Turks kept thrashing them until they went to the Turkish merchants’.⁶⁴

A Greek Orthodox from Karaman pointed to the effects of the Balkan Wars and the ensuing refugee problem: ‘All the Turks were good. We socialized with them and came to their villages and knew them well. They were like our brothers: honest in [their] dealings, laudable [–] and we had a lot of business with them. When the Turks were driven out of Salonica during the Balkan Wars, some came to Karaman. And when these Turks from Salonica arrived, relations began to sour. They gave the “old Turks” books to “enlighten” them and they organized boycotts. We called them “Greek Devils”’.⁶⁵ This process of politicizing identities also took place elsewhere. According to a witness from Antalya, zealots did not appear until 1915, when a ‘fanatical Greek-hater’, Azmi Bey, arrived as the governor-general. He began with the rich, who were sent into exile. Many Greek Orthodox then fled to Kayseri, and other places, because these expulsions occurred in the Province of Konya alone. Then came the First World War, and their German ally made the Turks fanatical, said

the informant. This was demonstrated during the Greek expedition in Asia Minor: 'The Turks had become beasts. However, deep down they loved us'.⁶⁶ Papakostis Papadopoulos added that from the time of Mustafa Kemal—the later Atatürk—from the middle of 1919, things got worse. Dim Charalambidis also thought that, 'The real hatred did not come to the Turks until Kemal's time—and the campaign of the Greek Army in Anatolia. It was not the Young Turk revolution that brought all this about. It only caused a temporary chill inside us because of the business [boycotts]'.⁶⁷

CONCLUSION

Most of the witnesses from Cappadocia remember that the Greek Orthodox got along well with their Muslim neighbours. Some categorized their relations with them as cordial; others emphasized that both parties had a mutual interest in the practicality of good relations. There are also some that convey a certain sense of superiority vis-à-vis their Muslim compatriots. In some cases this seems to mean a moral superiority; in others it appears to signify educational attainment and the extent of being modern, i.e., in excelling in the new sectors of the economy and society that was created by the process of globalization.

While there seems to have been an intense interaction between the Greek Orthodox and Muslims in Bor on the level of the business of everyday life and personal relations, it appears to have been more limited in Mersin. The evaluations of the Muslims there are also more negative. The difficulty lies in the term *Turk*. Whereas in Bor it most often meant a Muslim fellow villager, or an Ottoman official, the accounts from Mersin are less clear on this matter. Often, *Turk* seems to mean an Ottoman official; sometimes, a Muslim notable. Rarely does its usage suggest that fellow villagers are being referred to, as in Bor. This may well be due to reasons of class, as the witnesses belonged to the upper echelons of society, who socialized with their own kind.

There is a consensus among the informants irrespective of their hometown that the deterioration of relations between Christians and Muslims was caused by intervention from the world outside their towns and villages. Some point to the nationalist trends among the Young Turks in the aftermath of 1908; others to the policy of Turkifying Anatolia, to the arrival of Muslim refugees or to the Greek invasion of Anatolia (1919–1922) and the emergence of Turkish national resistance under Kemal's leadership. The

same accounts also indicate that this deterioration of relations contributed to transforming the boundaries between the two groups, making them less permeable and more rigid. This latter process seems to have taken place at different speeds, owing to the personal experience of the witnesses and to locality. But the tendency as a whole seems to be clear—namely, that the friction between Christians and Muslims changed from one of minor local differences (and similarities) to an increasingly inter-ethnic conflict, as society became more predisposed to yield to the impact of nationalism. This is also the case in regard to relations within the Greek Orthodox world, which saw a division of loyalties along the same lines that pitted Greek nationalism against Bulgarian nationalism—namely, between those who supported the Patriarchate of Istanbul, and those who stood behind the jurisdiction of Antioch because of the issue of Arab-speaking bishops. At the same time, all the accounts associate the homeland with their villages and towns in Anatolia. Some focus exclusively on the locality, while others see their world as part of Eastern Christianity as a whole.

NOTES

1. Nicholas Doumanis, *Before the Nation: Muslim-Christian Coexistence and its Destruction in Last Ottoman Anatolia* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013), p. 143.
2. Renée Hirschon, “We got on well with the Turks”: Christian-Muslim Relations in late Ottoman Times’, pp. 325–341 in David Shankland (ed.), *Archeology, Anthropology and Heritage in the Balkans and Anatolia: the Life and Times of F.W. Hasluck, 1878–1920*, Vol II (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2004).
3. Doumanis 2013, p. 23.
4. Kevin O’Rourke and Jeffrey Williamson, *Globalization and History: The Evolution of a Nineteenth-Century Atlantic Economy* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT University Press, 2000), pp. 1–5.
5. Taner Akcam, *A Shameful Act: the Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006), pp. 103–8.
6. Centre for Asia Minor Studies (CAMS), Cappadocia, 253.
7. Sia Anagnostopoulou, *Mikra Asia, 190s ai.-1919: I ellinorthodoxes kinotites: apo to Millet ton romion ston Elliniko Ethnos* (Athens: Ellinika Grammata, 1997), pinakas tou plithismou ton ellinorthodoxon kinotiton tis periokis tis Kappadokias, zantzak Nigdis, kaza Nigdis.
8. CAMS, Cappadocia, 253.
9. CAMS, Cappadocia, 256.

10. *Bodosakis*, Kostas Ch. Chatziotis (ed.), (Athens: Bodossaki Foundation, 2005), pp. 19, 20.
11. CAMS, Cappadocia, 256.
12. A. K. Koliadimou, *Apo tin Axo tis Kappadokias sto nomo Pellas: prosfygtikes diadromes, 1890–1940* (unpublished thesis, University of Thessaloniki, 2006), pp. 41–46
13. Sofia Anastasiadi-Manousaki, *Mnimes Kappadokias* (Athens: Kentro Mikrasiatikon Spoudon, 2002), pp. 253–26.
14. Anastasiadi-Manousaki, *Mnimes*, pp. 253–56.
15. Anastasiadi-Manousaki, *Mnimes*, pp. 253–56.
16. CAMS, Cappadocia, 256.
17. Eugene Rogan, *The Arabs: A History* (London: Alan Lane, 2009), p. 97.
18. Cf., e.g., Anagnostopoulou, p. 236.
19. CAMS, Cappadocia, 256.
20. Asli Emine Comu, *The Exchange of Populations and Adana, 1830–1927* (Istanbul: Libra, 2011), pp. 36–46.
21. CAMS, Cilicia, 5.
22. CAMS, Cilicia, 1.
23. Comu 2011, pp. 66–69.
24. Tülin Selvi Ünlü and Tolga Ünlü (eds), *Istasyon’dan Fener’e Mersin* (Mersin: Mersin Ticaret ve Sanayi Odasi, 2009), pp. 21, 35.
25. CAMS, Cilicia, 3.
26. CAMS, Cilicia, 3.
27. 1896, Adana, NA, FO 195/1930.
28. CAMS, Cilicia, 3; Meltem Toksöz, ‘Family and Migration: the Mavromatis’ Enterprises and Networks’ pp.359–82 in *Cahiers de la Méditerranée*, 82, 2011.
29. Evangelia Balta, ‘The Greek Orthodox Community of Mersina from mid-19th Century to 1921’, in *Mersin, the Mediterranean and Modernity, Colloquium: Heritage of the Long Nineteenth Century*, Mersin 2002, pp. 39–43.
30. CAMS, Cilicia, 5.
31. Bodosakis (Sotiropoulos), pp. 15–7.
32. CAMS, Capadokia, 60.
33. CAMS, Capadokia, 60.
34. CAMS, Cilicia, 9.
35. Derek Hopwood, *The Russian Presence in Syria and Palestine 1843–1914: Church and Politics in the Near East* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), pp. 159, 160.
36. Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: the Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia UP, 1997), p. 126.
37. CAMS, Cilicia, 3.

38. Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide: Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 60.
39. CAMS, Cilicia, 5.
40. CAMS, Cilicia, 3.
41. Fikret Adanir, 'Non-Muslims in the Ottoman Army and the Ottoman Defeat in the Balkan War of 1912-1913', in Ronald Grigor Suny, Fatma Müge Göçek and Norman M. Naimark (eds), *A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011), p. 125.
42. Akcam, pp.103–8.
43. Bodosakis (Sotiropoulos), pp. 23–26.
44. Adanir 2011, p. 125.
45. Bodosakis (Sotiropoulos), pp. 26, 27.
46. *I eksodos*, Vol II: *martiries apo tis eparchies tis kendrikis ke notias Mikrasias* (Athens: Centre of Asia Minor Studies, second edition, 2004), p. 522.
47. Bodosakis (Sotiropoulos), pp. 26, 27.
48. Cf., e.g. Akcam, citing Henry Morgenthau, pp. 105, 106.
49. The rule of the capitulations provided for the complete immunity of foreigners from local jurisdiction.
50. CAMS, Cilicia, 3b/184, Emmanuil Tsalikoglou, pp. 572, 586,606.
51. CAMS, Cilicia, 3b/184, Emmanuil Tsalikoglou, pp. 586, 606.
52. Bodosakis (Sotiropoulos), pp. 27–33.
53. Bodosakis (Sotiropoulos), pp. 33–40.
54. Oikoumeniko Patriarcheio, *Mavri Vivlos diogmon ke martyriou tou en Tourkia Ellenismou, 1914–1918*, pp. 412–13.
55. Bodosakis (Kostas Chadziotis), p. 33 (illustration).
56. Raymond H. Kevorkian, *The Armenian Genocide: A Complete History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), pp. 687, 688.
57. Bodosakis (Sotiropoulos), pp. 37-40.
58. Taner Akcam, *From Empire to Republic: Turkish Nationalism and the Armenian Genocide* (London: Zed Books, 2004), pp.160–74.
59. Akcam 2004, pp. 53–56.
60. CAMS, Cappadocia, 256.
61. Anastasiadi-Manousaki, *Mnimes*, p.257-8 and CAMS, Cappadocia, 256.
62. CAMS, Cappadocia, 256.
63. CAMS, Cappadocia, 256.
64. CAMS, Cappadocia, 256.
65. CAMS, Cappadocia, 256.
66. CAMS, Lycaonia, 13.
67. CAMS, Cappadocia, 256.

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Narratives of the Past and Cultural Heritage in Turkish Party Politics: From Republican Political Myth to Conservative Counter-revolution

Valeria Giannotta

Ninety years after the foundation of the Republic of Turkey, the Justice and Development Party—Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, or the AKP—has redefined Turkish politics by looking to the country's future with a clear vision of values, focused on national and religious traditions. Alongside a process of modernization imposed from above, intended to fill the identity void left by the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the Kemalist narrative prioritized Turkey's orientation to the West. However, the recent standing of its governments at home and abroad must be considered to be the outcome of identity changes the Turkish ruling elite have gone through. As the then Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said, 'Ten centuries ago, Turkey embraced Islam and this opened a new chapter for the Turkish nation and the world ... The victory of the AKP is also the result of the assault against national values'.¹ In other words, the AKP has encouraged a renewed interest in the country's past, especially the traditions of agrarian society and the roots of Turkish people. In order to grasp the impact that the AKP has had on Turkish society, it is best

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to begin with its 'conservative democratic' agenda, which, while holding to Islam as a code of moral conduct, still emphasizes the importance of Kemalism as 'the most important vehicle for the Turkish people's emancipation and as element of social peace'. By criticizing authoritarian secularist dogma and by reinserting the Ottoman past into the political narrative, the AKP has deliberately identified itself with a different set of values on the socioeconomic spectrum. This is a strategy that builds on historical imaginings of place to lay the foundations of a new geopolitical culture. In the early days of the republic, its terrain was thought to be ambiguous and dangerous, prompting Ankara's voluntary isolation from international affairs, but this has now been reversed by AKP policymakers. Turkey's increasingly close contacts in the region under its 'Zero problems with the neighbours' policy are designed to erase historical prejudices. Indeed, the strategic aim is to empower Turkey as both a regional leader and a global player, leveraging its geopolitical location and its cultural and economic clout, thanks to the special relations inherited from the Ottoman Empire. And although the current crisis in Syria is testing this strategy to the limit, Turkey continues to aspire to be a key regional player. This essay offers an analysis of Turkish policymakers' use of history and tradition in building a sociopolitical identity. If the construction of identity is taken to be a tool with which to define a national and international political role that meets the ruling elite's hopes, it will be seen that Turkey has had a sequence of different identities and interpretations of historical memory that have mirrored the rise and fall of different government groups (Yavuz 1998; White 2013). The historical narrative serves to make sense of the past and to give direction to the future. Collective memories, traditions, religion, and shared values are defined by institutions and public organizations, yet they gain real meaning only once they are internalized by social actors. As the social construction of identity always takes place in a context marked by power relationships (Giddens 1991) one can distinguish between a legitimizing identity, as introduced by a society's dominant institutions to extend their control of social actors, and resistance identity, as generated by those actors to resist the logic of power on the basis of principles rival to the ones accepted by the institutions (Castells 2009). Therefore, resistance identities can come to dominate social institutions and thus legitimize alternative narratives. Since the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, the modernization process has been interpreted in a variety of ways, creating crucial dichotomies at the point where traditional Islamic heritage intersects Western values (Kasaba 1997; Yilmaz 2005; Kerslake

et al. 2010). By focusing on the cleavage between secular and conservative politics, and thus taking the Islamic and Western components of Turkish identity into equal consideration (Turam 2012), the aim here is to chart the full variety of national identities over the course of Turkish political history. The key question to be explored is the importance of historical narratives and cultural heritage to Turkish politics: to what extent is contemporary Turkish politics informed by such notions, and how are they currently defined? What backgrounds and identities were promoted in the past? Have the AKP and its political agenda legitimized a new identity? And has today's favoured narrative of the past produced new model of inclusion, or has it been the cause of greater exclusion?

In answering these questions, it is worth remembering the peculiarities of history that led to the foundation of the republic. Since a nation is never built in a social vacuum, but is the result of complex societal interactions, it is necessary to examine the main features of Ottoman society that determined the fate of Turkey's later political history. Moreover, the republican emphasis on secularization and modernization was seen as crucial in stemming the Ottoman decline (Rustow 1965, 2009; Kazancigil 2009). Thus *laiklik*, or Turkish secularism, was specifically focused on producing an enlightened Islam, matched by a political strategy for containing religion in accordance to the needs of the state elite (Frey 1965).

By focusing on the political evolution of modern Turkey, born from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire, I go on to shed some light on the evolution of conservatism and the significance of cultural factors, which have significantly influenced the AKP's political ideology (Irem 2002). In the Turkish system, the gulf between the political centre and social periphery has been so large for so long because the centre is usually associated with the state's republican elite, while the periphery equates to the suburban, conservative middle class (Tunaya 1969; Mardin 1998; Flora 1999; Rokkan 1999). From the rise of political conservatism, I will move on to examine the reconfiguration of Turkish politics since the AKP government came to power, which, with its Islamic background, has given a new dimension to Turkey's international role. The country has undergone a critical transition from isolated, agrarian society with a strong social hierarchy to regional power with a liberal economy and a more inclusive socio-politics (Oktem 2011). Historically West-facing, Turkey under the AKP and its 'strategic depth' foreign policy of the last decade has set out to enhance its standing in the region as a whole. It is this new interpretation of politics, based on the importance of foreign policy in generating a sense of

common historical values and heritage, which has driven Turkey's foreign policy activism, undermining the Kemalist isolationist doctrine. Although some of the divisions of history and identity still remain, Turkey today is experiencing a dramatic return to its traditional geo-cultural matrix in the wake of the conservative counter-revolution.

FROM EMPIRE TO REPUBLIC

Ottoman politics was based on a strong state structure, in which the military played a crucial role in shaping the character of the empire in its efforts to be strong against enemies abroad and separatist forces at home, and to expand the reach of Islam by promoting public policies and increasing solidarity (Mardin 1983). Since political power was exercised in accordance with established rules designed to exalt the institution of the caliphate, the first immediately observable factor is the division between rulers and ruled: while there was an active, homogeneous group of individuals at the heart of the empire, on the periphery the population was heterogeneous and divided along ethnic and religious lines (Inalcik 1993). The caliph, however, also acted as the protector of his non-Muslim subjects, who benefited from a certain degree of autonomy in administrative matters. This was the essence of the *millet* system of protecting religious minorities, the disintegration of which as the founding of the republic approached, would mark the end of the glorious dreams of many Ottoman Turks and the renunciation of imperial ambitions based on a semi-permanent state of war (Cooper 2002).

The main task of the Kemalist revolution was the secularization and modernization of the country, designed to eliminate the theological justification of power, relying on a model of Western European inspiration. Indeed, in the creation of the modern state, secularization played a key role, helping to establish a new community identity acceptable to all the ethno-religious elements in Anatolia. In a way similar to the Ottoman tradition, however, the reforms were characterized by a strong elitism, intended to lead the citizens towards 'civilization' by implementing top-down policies under the leadership of 'enlightened' republican elites. In breaking with the Ottoman tradition, which held Islam to be a form of cultural identity, Kemalism became the leading principle in the political, social and cultural development of the new Turkey. In this, the Turkification of language and ideas was the first important step in defining the boundaries of the state and the national spirit. A natural corollary of the republican interpretation of Turkish nationalism was an exclusionary

culture premised on a profound suspicion of the ‘outsider’. This was the rationale behind the pacifist and isolationist doctrine under the motto ‘Peace at home, peace in the world’, later developed into ‘Turks have no other friends besides the Turks’ (White 2013).

At home, what most characterized the new Turkish experience was the state’s extreme differentiation between public affairs and religion. Turkish secularism not only tried to free the executive, legislature, and judiciary from all religious influence, but it emphatically restricted religion to the individual sphere, stressing that religion undermined freedom of conscience. The Turkish conception of secularism was not intended so much to ensure the separation of religion and state as to maintain firm control over religion in all its forms, monopolizing those functions that were previously associated with Islam and incorporating them into the logic of the state bureaucracy (Toprak 1990, 1995). All this served to widen the gap between secular policies and the Westernization process on one hand, and on the other the conservative values of pious Muslims, who found themselves increasingly marginalized. In other words, this bifurcation into radical elite and conservative masses culminated in an economic and social polarization between secularists and devout Muslims, and between the urban and rural classes (Kasaba 1997).

In all this, diverging interests have often had negative connotations, with the political class willingly serving the state in its ambition to limit dissension and not to fully represent the entire social spectrum. In the first stage of the modernization process, the dominant role was played by the Republican People’s Party (CHP), whose secularist narrative remained confined to the major cities, while the Anatolian populace, steeped in traditional Islamic values, became increasingly restless about the status quo (Zürcher 1993). The People’s Party’s ascendancy was de facto a milestone in the history of Turkey, for by establishing secular institutions and strengthening the foundations of the modern state it transformed the multinational, theocratic empire into a secular state, and so created a new Turkish identity. The rural populace’s attempt to counterbalance the status quo in their pursuit of religious freedom led to the birth of numerous political parties, designed to exclusively represent the interests of the devout. Although religion began to serve as a political tool too, the resurgence of Islam was not only a reaction to a given situation, but pointed to an alternative vision of modernity. In other words, the organization of conservative counter-elites should be understood in the light of the intense criticism of elitist political programmes.

CONSERVATISM AND CENTRE-RIGHT PARTIES

These political dislocations of centre versus periphery and state versus religion have proved enduring. The centre remained very much republican, reflecting the actions and role of the state bureaucracy, while the periphery corresponded to the suburban classes, who mainly supported right-wing or centre-right parties. The upshot was that the Turkish political system was dominated by two poles of attraction. The first was a concentration of party political power, maximized by expressing the official state ideology, while the other was the embodiment of a conservative, religious, and traditional identity banned from any political representation.

While a critical redefinition of this balance has followed on certain structural changes in society, in large part due to the ongoing industrialization and urbanization process, it is in the relationship between society and the centre-right party tradition that one finds the essence of Turkish conservatism. Although the Islamic recovery that sprang from these socio-transformations was politicized as protest parties—the right-wing Islamist parties such as Milli Nizam Partisi (MNP), Milli Selamet Partisi (MSP), Fazilet Partisi, and Refah Partisi, whose ideology was the same ‘national vision’ that had given Milli Görüş its name—the trademark of the centre-right conservative parties was their attempt by political means to find a public space for Islamic identity, emphasizing its relevance for Turkey’s economic and political development.

The Islamic political line is that Turkey’s material problems can be put down to foreign economic aid, compounded by a moral and spiritual crisis among the younger generation. The Milli Görüş movement emerged by evoking the importance of moral development as an indispensable element for the creation of ‘A great Turkey once again’, as its slogan ‘Yeniden Büyük Türkiye’ had it. The main thrust was that the Ottoman Empire had fallen far behind because of the loss of its cultural heritage, combined with the failure of its industrialization experiment. According to this view, the only way for Turkey to get back on the road to socioeconomic development would be to re-evaluate its history and culture by revitalizing its Islamic values. Thus, an emphasis on the Islamic–Ottoman ethos has been taken as a useful remedy in the pursuit of stability in a society suffering from the economic aftershocks of industrialization. The main contribution of Milli Görüş, then, has been the resuscitation of the Islamic–Ottoman reformist tradition, suggesting an authentic—indigenous rather than imported—morality. Since the modernization project has been based on

external references, and has not provided any identification model for new groupings or even ordinary suburbanites, Islam has become in equal measure a moral guide for Anatolian Muslims and a tool of political expression. The *turban*, or headscarf, its most visible symbol, was perceived as a reaction to the dominant cultural identity, and was duly banned from public life (Göle 1997).

In response to the 1980 *coup d'état*, Islamic groups started to be reintegrated into political life through the expansion of education, economic activities, and political organizations. While this brought a greater tolerance of Islamic symbols, centre-right conservatism culminated in the rise to power of Turgut Özal's Anavatan Partisi (ANAP), founded in 1983. The so-called 'Turkish-Islamic synthesis' in fact aimed to incorporate Islam within Turkish nationalism by combining it with liberal policies that would strengthen the social dimension of Turkish politics. By seeing Turkey as a bridge between West and East at the international level, Özal's decision to align Turkey with the US during the First Gulf War marked a clear break with the old Kemalist principle of neutrality (Aras and Gorener 2010). The ongoing -political and economic turmoil combined at the end of the cold war with increasing globalization, civil war in the Balkans, and growing unrest in the Middle East, and the redefinition of Europe's borders to unsettle many of the Turkish population, who demanded the restoration of a moral order, nostalgic for the supposed golden age of Islamic, Turkish, and Ottoman customs.

By emphasizing its adherence to religious values and local customs, this brand of conservatism adapted old concepts and practices to suit a new domestic and international dynamic. It advocated a return to a more traditional type of society that would promote family values and religious and territorial solidarity (Yildirmaz 2003). The religious morality of the rural community was writ large as a new 'modern traditionalist' path, with Islam as the leading value in a network of the myriad of small and medium-sized enterprises in the provinces, owned by pious Muslim businessmen, keen to promote modernization and the free market hand-in-hand with religious values. These so-called Anatolian Tigers were behind not only the emergence of an Islamic economic sector, but also a cultural, Islam-friendly renaissance. Özal, in other words, promoted a new market-oriented spirit, arguing that globalization, Islam, and traditional values were mutually compatible as long as they reflected Turkey's national interests.

In this, the concept of the nation was not just modelled on a defence of national borders and the Turkish bloodline, but on the multidimensional

heritage of the Ottoman Empire. There was a harkening back seminal events such as to Fall of Constantinople in 1453, and attempts to replicate the *millet* system—so central to the Ottoman sociopolitical model—by tolerating and integrating non-Muslim groups, while internationally the aim was to strengthen the old special relationships with certain neighbouring countries. With its mix of Turkish religious traditions and political references to an Ottoman identity, Muslim national conservatism legitimized a more inclusive approach, for it was more open to minorities and other identities, while it challenged the national, secular assumption of Turkish exceptionalism and isolationism (White 2013). Over time, it was this pragmatism that would contribute to the success of the AKP—a political party founded only 14 months before it came to power in 2002, and considered the direct beneficiary of Özal’s past achievements. And at heart of this programme were a series of assumptions about ‘conservatism’ and ‘liberalism’ that would set Turkey on a new course in its domestic and international relations.

FROM TRADITION TO MODERNITY WITH THE AKP

Although it does not deny its origins in the Islamic tradition, the AKP represents an important attempt to break away from the logic of the Islamist and nationalist movements and to define its identity, in full compliance with the Turkish covenant, as a synthesis of conservative, nationalist, and centre-right groups. This to some extent required a degree of continuity with the aspirations of the earlier conservative parties, which had sought to rectify the undemocratic nature of the Turkish political system. The AKP gave priority to the International Monetary Fund’s reforms, effectively adopting key aspects of the economic policies of the previous government, and to the Copenhagen criteria for eligibility to join the EU as necessary steps in the consolidation of democracy and to gain legitimacy among the public: in other words, the AKP entered the political arena with the declared intention of initiating a profound transformation of Turkey’s national and international role by removing all constraints on the democratization process.

In stressing the importance of human rights and universal values, the AKP’s programme included several references to international organizations and declarations, marking an important change from the Milli Görüş tradition, in which both the interim AKP prime minister and later president Abdullah Gül and the current president and then prime minister

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan had earned their political spurs. The original Milli Görüş domestic and foreign policies of rejecting Kemalist political modernization and Turkey's Western orientation, including its request for EU membership, went by the board, and the new AKP politicians announced that they had 'changed the shirt of Islamic discourse' by moderating their political language, making explicit reference to their wish to join the EU, and respecting universal values. To this end, they described the AKP as a 'conservative democratic' party, marking the beginning of a new Islam 'that is not in conflict, but can be reconciled with the new world order'.² In fact, the AKP questions both the Kemalist and the Islamic interpretations of history, and instead sees Turkish modernization as the sum of all the continuities and changes since the beginning of the Ottoman period, both the influence of Islamic and Western culture alike. As Erdoğan said, 'We do not reject our past ... We have always been tied to our spiritual roots and we want to continue to form a bridge between civilizations and to strengthen Turkey's role as the centre of our civilization'.³ The opportunity for this new synthesis stemmed from Erdoğan's wish 'to see a Turkey which makes a significant contribution to the mosaic of cultures ... hence our locally oriented position in a globalized world'.⁴ The idea that the vast majority wanted Turkey to develop without rejecting its traditions, yet while defending its own morality in pursuing non-fundamentalist change in the political arena, was a potent one:

Our party complies with the principles and reforms of Atatürk as the most important vehicle of modernization that raises the public of Turkey above the level of contemporary civilization and considers it as an element of social peace ... AKP considers religion as one of the most important institutions of humanity and secularism as the prerequisite of democracy and as the assurance of freedom of religion and conscience, refusing the distorted interpretation of secularism as an enemy of religion. Indeed, secularism is a principle that allows people of all religions and faiths to freely practise their religions and to freely express their beliefs as well as allows people without beliefs to organize their lives on own line. From this point of view, secularism is a principle of freedom and social peace. ... We refuse to take advantage from the sacred religious values and from ethnicity and to use them for political purposes. ... It is unacceptable to use religion for political and economic interests or to put pressure on people who live and think differently.⁵

Acknowledging the heterogeneous structure of Turkish society, the AKP government criticized the bureaucratic structure of the state and

its top-down legitimacy, and determined to resolve all the tensions in national politics by rejecting the interpretation of secularism as the ‘enemy of religion’.

The State should be secular and conservatism as a political tool giving importance to the history, social culture and religion has to be restored in a democratic form. ... Democracy becomes acceptable if it is able to combine a wide variety of differences and different social and cultural demands in the political arena ... We reject the radical change of the existing political structures through the creation of a new order, but in order to ensure a gradual change in most of the structures it is necessary to maintain and protect certain values. (Akdoğan 2006: 50–51)

The defence of the core values of family, local traditions, and patriotism based on Ottoman history and religion is declared in the AKP’s political manifesto on conservative democracy, in a conscious combination of social conservatism with liberal policies and economics. Undoubtedly, due to accelerating social mobility, the most important aspect of the programme was its emphasis on local traditions. As well as this ‘solidarity mechanism’, the AKP promoted business opportunities in order to support new interest groups in Anatolia and to encourage emancipation in the periphery of the country by ‘protecting their understanding of traditions and family values’ while matching modern and global standards.

In this, the Turkish family is perceived as the prime repository of social values, mainly defined in terms of patriarchal values, since the man of the household is dominant—traditionally men are the only ones entitled to enter public life and to make decisions. It was this complex interaction of family traditions, agrarian practices, religiosity—especially in the shape of *tarikat* (the Sufi doctrine of spiritual learning) and *vakıf* (endowments)—and community that shaped the AKP’s policies and drove the new, stronger Islamic revival (Çarkoğlu and Kalaycıoğlu 2009). Indeed, the common factor in this approach was a religious sensibility that was as concerned with community-building and an industrial society as it was with public morals. Ultimately, the AKP and its supporters share the belief that there is no morality without Islam, which is understood as the *sine qua non* for a society built on solid principles. Within this, the AKP articulates a particular set of values that hold politics to be public service: thus justice and development are understood not only as essential in the struggle against the iniquity of the system, but as symbolic values derived from the Islamic tradition.

Throughout the Turkish Republic's history, conservatives of all hues have sought to combine the positive aspects of Western progress with traditional Islamic values, recalling Ottoman glory in order to evoke a bright future for Turkey. What was new about the AKP's brand of conservatism comes down to Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's position in the sociocultural structure—a political anthropology of Turkish society where pressure from below has still not fully crystallized into full-blown political demands, and a sense of exclusion endures—and the public's view their elected leader as a paternal character who defends the 'proper' order of things. Conservative voters attribute this status to Erdoğan because he is 'one of them': because he does not hail from a wealthy background and perfectly expresses the historical feeling of protest inherent in the Anatolian–Islamic collective.

Reflecting Turkish society's hopes for a moral renewal, the first policies proposed by the AKP government concerned the central issues of religion and education. Indeed, ever since it first came to power, the AKP has worked for equal access to university for students from the *imam hatip* schools (religious secondary schools), in the teeth of fierce opposition from secularist and ultranationalist circles, who claim that it would undermine the principles of an education based on 'democratic, secular, egalitarian, fair, functional and scientific foundations'.⁶ However, with its clear parliamentary majority and popular approval, the AKP has succeeded in driving through its reforms. Similarly, the *türban* question has come to dominate the government's agenda. Although in the past the headscarf debate ended in deadlock, today the acceptance of head-covering practices indicates that there is greater tolerance and freedom of religious expression—indeed, currently the *türban* can even be worn in public buildings.

Our headscarved daughters were not allowed to attend universities. They closed down the vocational secondary schools [including the *imam hatip* schools]. What happened? We told you to be patient and promised to remove all these ... That day has come. With the 4+4+4 system, vocational high school students and *imam hatip* school students can now go to primary, secondary and high school ... And girls with or without headscarves could enter any school they wanted, as long as they were successful ... They put obstacles before our success, we have removed them.⁷

In other words, the AKP's hope was that by representing the 'authentic' Anatolian spirit and religious inclinations of Turkish society, the country would now be more open to a debate about consensual secularism in a way than it was in past. Plainly, under Erdoğan's leadership, Turkish politics has been directed in accordance with the moral rules that govern all Muslims.

Since the AKP maintains close ties with religion in the social sphere, its political agenda is framed in terms of moral conduct, although without explicitly invoking Islamic law. Given the secular constitution of the state, the new ruling elite are perhaps best seen as the result of Turkish Islamic heterogeneity (Dağı 2005). Behind the label of ‘conservative democracy’, in fact, lies the role of a new Muslim who makes no distinction between Islam and Western values, and is open to the possibility of a mutual exchange. Traditional interpretations of Islam, like Turkey’s wholly secular and West-facing frame of reference, have been set aside and the conservative identity legitimized. This has met with strong disapproval from the elements in Turkish society that have no truck with the government’s political rhetoric. Indeed, the government has been accused of deepening not only social polarization but sectarian discord, despite AKP claims to have cast aside the politics of denial and assimilation—referring to decades-long state policies that denied Kurds, non-Muslims, and sectarian minorities their rights. On several occasions, Erdoğan has declared that ‘that door has already been closed’, and, recalling the Prophet Muhammad’s term to describe Islam’s intolerance of racism, he has specifically saying that it is ‘under our feet’: ‘I don’t love Turks, Kurds and Arabs because of their ethnicity. I love them because they are created by God’.⁸ Moreover, despite past governments’ refusal to admit to the massacres of minorities and authoritarian assimilation policies, the AKP has apologized for the atrocities committed in the past by the state.⁹ It is noteworthy that, for the first time in the history of the Turkish Republic, the government has recognized the existence of other ethnic and cultural identities—the Kurds, for example, and the Alevi—breaking with the traditional understanding of Turkish citizenship, admitting that Turkey has made mistakes, and that diversity issues should be resolved through the democratic process, in accordance with the principles of ‘a single state, one nation and one flag, where Islam is the cement of national unity’.¹⁰ This is a clear demarcation line in Turkish politics. Indeed, the AKP’s success in garnering more and more votes over three electoral terms is a tangible example of the general disillusionment with the Kemalist modernization project and its interpretation of history. By replacing the dominant narrative of the nation with a more inclusive one, the current conservative elite is hoping to develop an interpretation of historical memory in which religion is the basis of the social order, and the Ottoman Empire becomes an important touchstone and a source of Turkish pride.

A NEW TURKISH FOREIGN POLICY

The AKP government's approach to the country's geopolitical position has been informed by Turkey's national and religious traditions. The former Foreign Minister, Ahmet Davutoğlu, in his influential book *Statejik Derinlik* ('Strategic Depth'), articulated in detail the desire to harmonize Western and Islamic identities in order to improve relations with its neighbours. Since Turkey is located in the middle of the 'geo-cultural basin' of the West, the Middle East, the Balkans, and Central Asia, Ankara had to implement an active policy, especially if it was to reap the benefits that its location offers. 'According to its historical background and its geographical location Turkey is strictly tied to this area. Therefore Turkey shouldn't fall, as it happened in the past, into the mistake of turning its back to this basin merely following the appeal of western Europe and trans-regional alliances' (Davutoğlu 2001). Turkey's historical responsibilities towards these areas, the Balkans, for example—

have been of particular importance in the liquidation of the Ottoman state and its resistance against Western colonialism. Moreover, it is a remarkable achievement that the developments of the last 15 years in the Balkans have raised the question of sociopolitical and cultural identity, and the fact that after the experienced massacres both Bosnia and Albania look at Turkey as foreign policy parameter. In particular, the Muslim majority of these two countries make them natural allies as well as the Turkish and Muslim minorities in Bulgaria, Greece, Macedonia, Kosovo and Romania are important elements for the projection of Turkey in the Balkans. ... Since it has been one of main external borders of the Empire the same importance has to be given to the Caucasus areas that thanks to their natural hydrocarbons sources have a strong geopolitical and geo-economical importance. (Davutoğlu 2001)

However, the real departure in Davutoğlu's strategic analysis concerned Turkey's relations with the Middle East and the Arab nations. Ever since the end of the Ottoman Empire, the nationalists, intent on recasting Turkish identity along Western lines, had considered it necessary to eliminate Arab influence. For almost a century, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire was synonymous with the dissociation of Turkey from the rest of the Middle East. Davutoğlu instead argued that, 'Given the strategic depth of the country, having been the epicentre of important historical events during the Ottoman Empire, Turkey must adopt a balanced approach towards each regional and global actor and must establish strong

economic ties with all states in the region' (Murinson 2006). Under the AKP, the Ottoman past was no longer to be seen as a historical period to be surmounted. This marked a clear break with the previous elitist political tradition, which had filled the vacuum left by the waning of the Ottoman identity with Kemalist isolationism. Foreign policy was now to be based on the assumption that because—

Turkey's multiple identities cannot be reduced to a single character or to a single region, therefore it is necessary to extend Turkish influence to all surrounding areas. Moreover, as in the past Turkey had played a key role in unifying most of the Islamic World of the Middle East and the Balkans today it has a real potential for becoming an Islamic superpower (Davutoğlu 2008).

Turkey's new approach to geopolitics was thus the product of the role played by past civilizations in the world history. The importance of certain cultural considerations has led the government to envisage a leadership role for Turkey in the historical trajectory of Islamic world. In order to act as a pivotal country in geopolitical terms, Turkey will have to lead the revitalization of Islamic civilization in its immediate geo-cultural context. In describing this newfound interest in its regional role, evoking the imperial past and more recent cultural affinities, Ankara used the 'Zero problems with the neighbours' rhetoric, hoping to minimize problems and avoid regional conflicts.

The opening of Turkey's foreign policy towards the region cannot be separated from reorganizing the relations with neighbouring countries. ... A State which experiences continuous crises with its neighbours cannot produce regional and global policies ... In order to overcome the tensions with neighbours the relations with these countries have to develop from institutional rivalry and have to be extended on a wider basis where the economic and cultural factors prevail ... Turkish society is engaged in the redefinition of itself as a natural consequence of the identity crisis identity that is living. A foreign policy structured around a single axis prevents the adoption of a political and diplomatic approach fully respectful of Turkish history. A unique and rigid approach cannot implement changes on the international scene and neither can it raise Turkey to the status of a regional and international power ... Turkey's role as a bridge between East and West is more pertinent than ever. ... The static (Kemalist) approach had condemned Turkey to be a passive actor especially at regional level. The prior condition to evolve and to expand global influence is to invest our geopolitical position according to the dynamics of international economic, political and security relations (Davutoğlu 2001: 143–149).

Turkey's policies towards the Middle East and its role in the region have in fact changed dramatically in the years since the AKP came to power, although some developments date back further than that, to Turgut Özal's administration. Where acting as a bridge used to mean the transference of Western values eastwards where they would be passively accepted, Davutoğlu saw Turkey's role as an active one, engaged in an open dialogue between cultures. Its activities in Central Asia and Africa, its links with the EU and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, its non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council, and its continuing efforts to become a key player in the energy politics of the region are all part of the same foreign policy goal: to preserve Turkey's traditional orientation towards the West and to defend both the Eurasian and Middle Eastern components of the Turkish identity (Davutoğlu 2008).

When it came to power in 2002, the AKP made a strategic choice to reintegrate Turkey into both the Middle Eastern and European political systems. The European rapprochement represented a radical break with the line taken by previous Islamist parties and their strongly anti-Western rhetoric. In its efforts to take the European path, the AKP emphasized that solidarity between Europe and Turkey stemmed from their common adherence to universal values; it is for that reason that Turkey is a natural mediator between the West and the Muslim world. According to Davutoğlu, it is by virtue of its proximity to Europe that Turkey has been able to develop its soft power and to build better relations with the Arab countries. However, if Turkey is to be a window onto the Arab world, one cannot discount the ideological dimensions of this openness for a predominantly Muslim and largely post-Ottoman region. The progress made with Syria until the revolution of 2011 is a case in point. An open-border policy and economic liberalization contributed to a qualitative change in Turkish–Syrian relations; indeed, after the crisis in the nineties brought the two countries to the brink of war,¹¹ relations with Damascus had begun to improve to the point where Ankara considered them as a confidence-building example for the whole Middle East. Starting in June 2009, Turkey and Syria, with Jordan and Lebanon, created a mechanism for the gradual establishment of the free movement of goods and people in the area. The sheer scope of this initiative was striking, and was a concrete example of how historic enemies could strike up a strategic partnership on both the economic and political levels. It also chimed with the diplomatic approach Davutoğlu had sketched out to integrate Turkey's national interests into the rhetoric of a hypothetical 'Turkish–Arab brotherhood'.

Ankara's rethinking of its strategic choices and re-evaluation of the Arab world were borne out by the Arab Spring, which left the Turkish leadership far more alert to its neighbours' internal affairs, and propelled Turkey into the position of being a model of modernization in the region. With its liberal economy and socio-conservatism, it was first thought a success story to be copied in an attempt to fill the political vacuum left by the revolutions. Erdoğan's speech after the 2011 general elections clearly emphasized the beneficial effects of AKP politics, not only for the Turkish people, but also for neighbouring populations:

All Countries are looking up to Turkey and they are following the news from Turkey. I warmly welcome them by saying '*selam*' to Baghdad, Sham, Beirut, Amman, Cairo, Tunis, Sarajevo, Baku ... Istanbul won as Sarajevo won, Izmir won as Beirut won, Ankara won as Sham, Diyarbakır won as Amman.¹²

Turkey redoubled its efforts to engage in the Middle East after the Arab Spring, and relations with its neighbours have increased exponentially: the growth in trade is nowadays matched by increasing interaction among public officials, civil society, universities, and businessmen. The Middle East began to be treated as a question of national politics by the Turkish media, which soon began to broadcast in Arabic; and, as is sadly evident from the recent Syrian diasporas, Turkey has become a shelter for the Arab refugee and non-refugee migrants. In other words, these dynamics, seen and accepted by the majority of Turkish society as an important political and humanitarian responsibility, are a further new element in the history of the modern Republic of Turkey.

This is in stark contrast to the Kemalist doctrine, even if it is not so far removed from the motto uttered by Atatürk, 'Peace at home, peace in the world'. The AKP's notion of national identity sees Turkey shouldering its cultural and historical responsibilities to play an effective regional and global role; however, this new regional activism has also prompted rumours that the AKP is pursuing a 'neo-Ottoman agenda', fuelling the criticism of some its foreign-policy choices, especially concerning Turkey's change of axis. Turkey's criticism of Israel and support of Hamas, like its willingness to acknowledge Iran's right to develop peaceful nuclear technology, clearly shows the importance of a common historical heritage based on shared values and religious beliefs: 'Turkey and Iran share very deep historical ties emphasizing the importance of many issues for bilateral relations, starting from economic cooperation to security ... In reference to this multidimensional partnership, then, Turkish–Iranian relations

have to be defined as “strategic”. As for Israel, the storming of the *Mavi Marmara* in May 2010, coming on top of the rising diplomatic tensions caused by the Gaza War of December 2008, presented the first real test of Turkey’s good-neighbour policy. Although ever since its first term in office the AKP has expressed a desire to mediate in the conflict between Israel and Palestine, this remains one of the most controversial issues because it clearly shows how Turkish foreign policy is influenced by ideological and moral factors. Unlike the isolationist, xenophobic attitude of the old Kemalist establishment, confirmed in their belief that Turkey was surrounded by enemies, the AKP’s foreign policies are the result of the transformation of the decision-making process rather than an ideological de-Westernizing or Islamizing reconfiguration of Turkey’s international role. In fact, this reflects the conservative democratizing experience of the 2000s, which has produced a less divisive identity both at home and abroad.

CONCLUSIONS

Every policymaker develops strategies of self-representation that are informed by particular traditions and historical narratives. The result is a specific cultural and political identity, duly announced and legitimized as a dominant stance within the political system. Since breaks with the past are part and parcel of the transformation of political narratives, the changing character of the Turkish ruling elite is reflected in the peculiarities of the contemporary identity-building process, and helps us to understand how, alongside the sociopolitical developments, identities built in opposition to the political mainstream might become dominant, and vice versa. Indeed, the trichotomies of urban–secular–national and peripheral–Islamic–conservative are narratives that reflect different interpretations of Turkey’s cultural heritage by according different weight to the same elements in the national identity. In its early stages, the Republic of Turkey could best be defined as resulting from the Kemalist strategy to control, restrict, and build a political order founded on a model of exclusionism and isolationism by severing any connection with the Ottoman past and with certain traditional and religious values. The conservative majority, once excluded from the elite game of politics, began to redefine their understanding of the world—and to achieve a new prominence. Over the past few years, the protection of traditions and religious values, like the revival of the country’s Ottoman heritage, has grown in importance in the

political narratives that promote a new cultural paradigm of modernity. Turkey's national identity has changed in step with the rise of conservatism, which helps explain the AKP's three consecutive successes at the polls, reflecting its conservative interpretation of politics and a more inclusive system of representation which had its foundation in solidarity networks. Indeed, by discarding the Kemalist framework while preserving an element of continuity with earlier conservative narratives, the AKP, in its attempt to forge a conservative democratic identity, paid special attention to local culture and religious values as important traditional entities. The style and the new approach embodied by 'conservative democracy' have been useful for encouraging emancipation from the rigid patterns of the Republican past, for rediscovering the Ottoman legacy, and for promoting a more inclusive political culture, reflected in the extension of Turkey's foreign policy through the country's engagement in the region as the legitimate successor of the Ottoman Empire. Due to its crucial impact on domestic and foreign policies, and notwithstanding the persistent differences of opinion, the dominant identity proposed by the AKP was plainly the outcome of a conservative counter-revolution, intended to establish a moral framework by defending a certain set of values for a new cognitive interpretation of the past and a more inclusive political discourse.

NOTES

1. Quoted in B. Keneş, 'Democracy vs Strategy', *Turkish Daily News*, 8 March 2003.
2. A. Bulaç, in *Bilgi ve Düşünce*, 2003, quoted in M. Yüksel, 'Siyasal İslam Bitti, Yasasın Yeni İslamcılık', *Hürriyet*, 16 February 2003.
3. R. T. Erdoğan, 'Medeniyet İnşa Ediyoruz', *Yeni Safak*, 9 May 2006.
4. R. T. Erdoğan, Speech on conservative democracy, American Enterprise Institute, 29 January 2004, <http://www.aei.org/docLib/Conservative-Democracy-and-the-Globalization-of.html>.
5. AKP, *Development and Democratization Program*, Ankara, 2001 ch. 2 § 2.1. 'Fundamental Right and Political Principles'.
6. S. Yazıcı, 'Türk Silahlı Kuvvetlerinin Yetki ve Ayrıcalıkları: Sivilleşmeye Yönelik Anayasal ve Yasal Reformlar?' *Hukuk ve Adalet*, 1/4 (2004): 249–50, quoted in Hale and Ozbudun (2010: 50).
7. R. T. Erdoğan, quoted in 'Choose religious elective courses for your children, Turkish PM advises parents', (*Hürriyet Daily News* 2013).
8. 'Erdoğan: Denial and assimilation policies are 'under our feet'', *Today's Zaman*, 14 September 2013.

9. Kemalist modernization and Turkish identity-building shared the tendency to see Kurds, Alevis, and non-Muslim minorities marginalized or assimilated into general population by denying their ethnic and religious background. All of those groups suffered from social exclusion and state repression (Oktem 2011).
10. Quoted in *Today's Zaman*, 12 August 2005.
11. Turkey threatened the Syrian government (the Kurdistan Workers Party) with armed reprisals for providing shelter to the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan and refusing to extradite him until 1998.
12. <http://www.akparti.org.tr/site/haberler/basbakan-erdoganin-12-haziran-gecesi-yaptigi-konusmanin-tammetni/8520>.

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Public Narratives and the Construction of Memory Among European Muslims

Roza Tsagarousianou

Salma, a 20-year-old Londoner of Pakistani origin, reflecting in the course of a group discussion on whether there is a place for her and other young fellow Muslims in contemporary European societies, expressed her dismay at the reluctance of public opinion to acknowledge European Muslims as equal stakeholders:

I do not understand why[,] when people think of Islam, of Muslims, they only think of terrorism and misogyny. Muslims built Córdoba, Granada and so many other fabulous cities wherever they went. They made so many scientific discoveries, they lived peacefully with the Christian and Jewish inhabitants of the Caliphate. Why [do] Europeans forget this?

Interestingly, she articulated this reluctance in terms of forgetting. The presence of Muslim communities and of Islam in Europe is not new. Indeed, shortly after the establishment of the Muslim Caliphate, and the Muslim expansion of the eighth century, much of Europe lay under Muslim rule. Islam and the religious, philosophical, scientific and political innovations it fostered not only influenced but also became part of Europe

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and the collective memory and consciousness of European societies. European territories have been homes for vibrant Muslim communities and polities for numerous generations, which have left their indelible mark in the landscape, culture and memory of European societies. More recently, migrant communities, part of a global and transnational Muslim diaspora, have settled in Western Europe and handed over the mantle to subsequent generations of European Muslims, including a far-from-insignificant number of converts.

Despite this undeniable presence of Islam and Muslims in Europe, the Muslim communities that live there, and the presence of Islam in this continent as a religious, cultural and, possibly, political force, have become the focus of attention only relatively recently. As Esposito points out, it is only ‘in recent decades [that] Islam has gone from being invisible in America and Europe to being a prominent feature in the religious landscape’ (2002: 2) and, I would add, in the continent’s social topography. This visibility has been qualified in the sense that it has been partial and focused on particular representations of Islam. What is more, as Ballard argues, Europe [has been is/constitutes? the product of a long process of suppressing the differences that separated the continent’s quite diverse peoples, and accentuating, even institutionalizing, its juxtaposition to the Muslim populations and states that had emerged at its southern and eastern boundaries (Ballard 1996: 20; also Sofos and Tsagarousianou 2013, especially Chap. 1; Delanty 1995: 23–24; Neumann 1999). Europe, as a geopolitical concept, has been premised on the assumption that Muslims have always been “external” to it: perpetual outsiders belonging to different civilizations, and symbolically “banished” to the continents of Africa and Asia. Ballard locates the start of this process at the time of the Crusades, an era when the then “unsuspecting” Europeans started defining themselves in juxtaposition to the non-Christian Muslim enemy, on the basis of their common Christianity and sense of collective trauma that the relinquishing of the Holy Lands—as well as of territories that were traditionally seen as heartlands of Christendom in the emerging continent’s East and West—entailed. This set of narratives, that is, of Muslims being perpetual outsiders to an ahistorical and culturally unified Europe, ignores the historical presence for centuries of Muslim populations whose lives have contributed to shaping territories that today are considered to be “indisputably” European. It also ignores the fact that medieval and early modern Muslims in Al-Andalus were not immigrants or invaders but indigenous willing converts, just like their Sicilian co-religionists who had invited the Muslim Aghlabid armies to put an end to the chronic

corruption and maladministration of the Christian elites. In some way, then, the very substance of Europe is premised not only on a common religion, as Ballard very reasonably suggests, but also on the cultivation of a widespread “forgetting” of the complexity of the relationship among Europe, Christianity and Islam, and of a corresponding memory of a strict, mutually exclusive relationship between Europe and the Islamic world.

Several centuries later, European societies, home to several million Muslims, migrants and converts alike, face questions and choices that have largely been shaped by the earlier encounter of Europe with Islam. These societies are experiencing a need to define a Europe that clearly does not fit the conventional definitions premised on the notion of cultural homogeneity, and to determine the place Muslims have in it, given the historical cultural baggage inherent in the very definition of the continent as a geo-cultural entity. And, at the same time, Muslims building their lives in Europe have to engage, consciously or subconsciously, with the persistent narratives that posit them at the antipodes of European identity or banish them, just as they had their medieval predecessors, from the social imaginary of Europe. Being excluded from visualizations of modern European societies, Muslims try to find ways of (re)establishing themselves in this imaginary or, rather, of constructing a sense of belonging that counters the organized amnesia which often renders them incompatible and undesirable and makes them feel rootless and dejected. Their sense of exclusion and inability to identify with the dominant symbols and ideology in the societies they call home has contributed to the development of alternative strategies of memory and commemoration.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore some key aspects of the politics of memory that form an inextricable component of European Muslim self-definitions, discourses and narratives deployed in the attempt to negotiate their inclusion in European societies. To this end, I draw on group and individual interviews with 735 European Muslims.¹ Although my sample is not statistically representative of Europe’s Muslim population, I think that the broad spectrum of opinion can allow us to identify trends that are evolving. From a total of 735 informants, 149 articulated definitions of being Muslim that emphasized “culture”, values, “ways of doing things” in a way that echoes Dassetto’s designation of part of Europe’s population as “cultural Muslims”. A further 82 chose what I would describe as a secular, “political” definition; that is, they described themselves and other Muslims as a primarily or exclusively racialized category and as victims of racism and Islamophobia, but also as subjected to socioeconomic and political discrimination. Nevertheless, a not insignificant proportion

of those interviewed valued Islam as a religion and, indeed, considered themselves religious, albeit in ways that do not always meet the criteria, set by Sander and others, that are premised on mosque membership and religious-service attendance. The fact remains that such definitions of religiosity are rather prescriptive and rigid, and thus are unhelpful in understanding the changing nature of Islam in general, and European Islam and Muslims in particular.

Drawing upon Sander's distinction among *ethnic*, *cultural*, *religious* and *political* definitions of being Muslim, this research therefore resorted to the use of multiple sampling frames relevant to these dimensions of experience. It did so by identifying a number of "starting points" that could provide access to diverse fields of practice and interaction and enable the compilation of a broad and diverse sample that would reflect the polyphonic universe of European Islam. This included mosques, prayer halls, religious associations, community centres with links or affiliations to countries or ethnic groups where Islam is practised (including many that exclude Islam from their names or self-definitions), youth centres and projects in areas of high Muslim population concentration or in culturally diverse areas with substantial Muslim minorities, and organizations and initiatives against Islamophobia or racism. Potential informants were also located among students enrolled at universities and colleges, with the help of student organizations that put us in touch with members whose surnames are commonly found in countries where Islam is practised, or through visits to student societies with interests in Islam or in the regions where Islam is widely practised. The population sample that resulted, although not necessarily statistically representative of the Muslim population in the areas covered, was considerably diverse in terms of ethnicity, geographical origins, and socioeconomic backgrounds, but also in terms of the intensity of religious belief and practice. What is more, this method made it possible to access individuals that more traditional sample framing methods were likely to overlook, as they did not necessarily "fit" into established or widely held research preconceptions as to who is a Muslim and who is not.

The interviews covered a variety of themes, including definitions of terms such as "home", "Islam", "Muslim"; as well as the exploration of respondents' religious feeling and attendance (or lack thereof) at mosques, the importance of religion, experiences of discrimination, political engagement, media and cultural practices, extending further to family, relationships, concerns and aspirations. Although "memory" did not feature explicitly in the discussions, it clearly constituted a significant element in the discourses of interviewees about themselves and others. Memory, in

these instances, took various different forms in connection to engaging with and relating to the past.

HISTORICAL MEMORY

Interviewees, for example, drew upon, and reproduced historical “memory”, premised on historical narratives reconstructing, for instance, the times of the Caliphate and its cultural and scientific achievements, as exemplified by the (Salma) quotation at the beginning of this chapter. Similarly, Hussein, a 25-year-old shopkeeper from Amsterdam, talked about the openness of Islamic societies at the time of the Reconquista in Spain:

When Spain kicked out all these thousands of Muslims and Jews, who accepted them with open arms? Who gave them land to build new lives? Not Christian Europe!

Maryam, a 30-year-old teacher from Belgium, emphasized the splendour of Islamic civilization in Spain:

When you visit the Muslim cities of Spain, you can hardly ignore the fact that there flourished a civilization with a sense of beauty and advanced technological knowledge.

This historical “memory” is clearly constructed, maintained and mediated through a number of institutions and practices. Some of these are focused on the production of history/histories of Islam, while others are much more diffuse in terms of focus. Mosques and various other Islamic institutions provide lectures and seminars for younger and older audiences alike that directly focus on the construction and propagation of a history of Islam, from the early years of the Prophet Muhammad to more recent times. In addition, there is now a whole array of Muslim media (especially multimedia packages [or audio-visual material available on CDs and DVDs as well as games]) that contain narratives or, in the case of game activities designed to virtually reconstruct the time of the Prophet Muhammad, depictions of daily life in the Caliphate or life in Muslim Spain.²

Historical memory is also reproduced via the medium of material culture, through the construction and circulation of particular artefacts and commodities. The latter type of dissemination of this memory is evident in the various products (T-shirts, caps and bags) featuring slogans about the reinstitution of the Caliphate that are popular among some young Muslims. To this can be added the increasing popularity of “historical”

tourism packages to “Muslim Spain”, “Ottoman Istanbul” and the Middle East, specifically tailored for European Muslims, which are part and parcel of this propagation of “memory” of an Islamic past to which Europe’s Muslims can look for inspiration or self-validation.

So great seems to be the need for “remembering” the distant past that one can encounter instances of appropriation and domestication of resources and commodities that may have proved controversial in the past. Such is the case of Moustapha Akkad’s feature film *The Message*, a quite unusual biopic of the Prophet Muhammad.³ A Hollywood production, eventually funded by Muammar Gaddafi, as other Middle Eastern financiers disavowed it, with leading roles played by Anthony Quinn, John Gielgud and Irene Pappas, the film was one of the most controversial of the 1970s. Ahead of its US premiere, unfounded rumours that Quinn was starring as Muhammad were enough to prompt, in March 1977, 12 members of the *Black Muslims* organization to storm three buildings in Washington DC, taking 149 people hostage and demanding that the film be destroyed. The siege resulted in the deaths of a police officer and a radio reporter. Future Washington mayor Marion Barry was also wounded by a shotgun pellet. The hostages were eventually released after a 39-hour stand-off. The film’s world premiere in London in July 1976 was preceded by intense debate, with various groups calling the film “sacrilegious” and “an insult to Islam”, while the film had a mixed reception in the Muslim world. It was banned in many Arab countries.

However, three decades later, the very same film (now in DVD format) was available—indeed, prominently displayed in the windows—at Muslim bookshops in London’s Whitechapel area, just a few hundred yards from the East London mosque; and moreover at Islamic bookshops in Amsterdam, Copenhagen and Malmö. The response of the shop owners to the obvious question of how this film’s turbulent and controversial history had a non-detrimental effect on its reception by themselves and their customers was very simple: Muslim parents desperately needed positive role models and ways of narrating the early Islamic era that would be captivating and interesting to their children. In this context—a need to provide important stimuli for Muslim children “to learn about the past”—Hollywood’s only film that dealt with the early Islamic era was “rehabilitated” and acquired a new social life through its re-localization and consumption.

As Arjun Appadurai points out in his introduction to the edited volume *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (1986), the

status of an object, or the value of a commodity, can change over time depending on combinations of politics, and ecologies of social interaction and desire. It could be argued in this case that a combination of the political situation and imperative of the local Muslim community's cultural reproduction prompted a reinterpretation of the film, and invested it with new value and status. The need of European Muslim parents to find ways to preserve a vivid "memory" of the history of the time and life of the Prophet Muhammad in this instance therefore should be situated in the context of the current Islamophobic European discourses, in the context of which it becomes intelligible. Such processes of domestication are clearly instrumental, not only in creating a space for the reproduction of historical "memory", but also in overcoming under-representation, exclusion, alienation and investing everyday spaces with meaning.

More generally, although this historical "memory"—(re)produced through classes, lectures, the media, historical tourism and aspects of material culture—is temporally remote and, for many of the project respondents, constitutes just an abstract and imprecise body of "recollections", it is, nevertheless, embraced passionately and used in attempts either to validate the settlement of Muslim communities in Europe, or to refute discourses that posit Islam as a backward and primitive religion and Muslim cultures as archaic and partial.

COLLECTIVE MEMORY

Another type of memory that emerges from the data collected and analysed takes the form of "individual" or collective reminiscences of the not-so-remote past. Although the majority of narratives in this case appear to be "individual" properties of respondents, it should be pointed out that these are the product of intersubjective exchange, discussion and negotiation. This is by no means a unique feature of the data collected; as one of the founding fathers of the study of collective memory, Maurice Halbwachs, suggests, "the framework of collective memory confines and binds our most intimate remembrances to each other. It is not necessary that the group be familiar with them" (1992: 53). In other words, individual memories do not exist in isolation but take shape and acquire meaning within broader social contexts. Individual recollection consists effectively of what Charles Taylor calls ontological narratives (Taylor 1989): that is, the stories that social actors use to make sense of their lives and develop strategies of action. Ontological narratives are, above all, social and

interpersonal; they draw upon what Taylor calls “webs of interlocution”, or what others call “traditions” (Somers 1994: 618), in terms of the raw material and the cultural codes they incorporate.

On the other hand, collective memory relates to what Taylor calls “public narratives”—that is, narratives attached to cultural and institutional formations larger than the single individual: to inter-subjective networks or institutions—from families, to workplaces, communities or nations. According to Taylor (1989), it is not only ontological narratives that depend on public ones; public narratives, too, draw upon the former in order to generate raw material for the construction of a sense of “we”. It is in this intersection of the personal and the public, of ontological and public narratives, that I would situate the memories that respondents, and, by extension, all/European Muslims, generate in order to root themselves in their local environment and produce claims to local space, positioning themselves vis-à-vis Europe and the societies in which they live.

The first set of narratives I will be focusing on have a strong local dimension, and constitute means of “making space” (Metcalfe 1996) and investing that space with what I would call “temporal depth”. When asked what place they would call home, about two-thirds of the respondents opted for their locality, although the extent of this varied considerably, ranging from their neighbourhood, to their city and, occasionally, their region. Indeed, the boundaries of home were often intermixed in their responses in a variety of ways. In larger, more impersonal, cities, or in areas where the urban space is fragmented or city life segregated, such as Paris and East London, the neighbourhood was more often than not seen as a place of safety, solidarity and intimacy.

Many younger, mainly male, informants saw their neighbourhoods in terms of a safe “territory”, where friends—*brothers* (and in the case of women, *sisters*) was often the word used—could “hang out” together, away from the rest of the urban space, which they often describe as inimical and unsafe. This construction of geographies of safety and danger was often supported by recollections of events that reinforced such boundaries in the urban space.

Speaking of how he felt whenever venturing outside his neighbourhood in the northeast of Paris, nineteen-year-old Hassan, says [characteristically]:

[In other parts of Paris] you feel out of place. I think everyone is looking at me, telling me with their eyes I do not belong. ... I have been stopped so many times by the police ... routine they always say but I know too well they are telling me and people like me that we do not belong.

Hassan's recollections of being stopped by the police are transformed into reminders that he is out of place, indicators of exclusion and marginalization. Throughout his reflections, Hassan clearly identifies himself and his friends as "Muslims"; as does Ali, a 17-year-old East Londoner from Whitechapel, who distinguishes his neighbourhood from other parts of London which he considers dangerous.

You hear about people being knifed all the time. ... I grew up hearing about this ... countless stories; I even knew a couple of people who managed to run away to safety. Racists are always trying to find you where you are alone, away from home. You know, here you can count on your brothers. They will stand next to you if they [racist attackers] come. They will think twice because they know us ... they know that we look out for our Muslim brothers.

Ali draws on his and others' recollections of racist violence—or, more precisely, the recollections of others as he grew up hearing about these—in order to build this topography of fear and danger as well as of solidarity. Interestingly, his account intermixes Islamophobia with racism, and implicitly puts forward, not a religious, but an "ethnicized" understanding of Islam. Anwar, 16 years old and from East London, makes a point about the violent and dangerous character of places where the help of Muslim friends cannot be relied on.

So many people I know have been attacked and stabbed. It is dangerous in the street, and it is good to know your mates are there for you; and you do not go beyond that ... You simply don't.

Samira, a 19-year-old Belgian woman, recounts living in her Antwerp, predominantly Muslim neighbourhood and her venturing outside it somewhat differently, as her experience is inflected by the way she sees herself as a young Muslim woman.

I remember when my mother and I had to travel to see my aunt and cousins in Ghent. It was strange as I could immediately see that people would stare at us as if we were a curiosity. Many times women would whisper while staring, sometimes people would cast angry looks. This made me feel strange, uncomfortable ... Only when I became older and got more directly engaged with racism did I understand why people could not resist showing their disapproval of the fact that we were dressed differently, that we were covering our heads, that we were there ... You did not feel that at all in the old neighbourhood, where we lived a happy and carefree childhood ...

A college student who covers her head and dresses in ways consistent with her sense of modesty derived from being a Muslim, Samira recounts childhood memories of safety and comfort in her Antwerp neighbourhood, and juxtaposes/contrasts these with recollections of venturing to inimical places outside it, where she remembers being exposed to what she experienced as unkind and often aggressive scrutiny because she was perceived as different.

Sa'ida and Nadia, both 25 years old and from Amsterdam, recount a story from their childhood years, when three young people were attacked—and one of them injured—after venturing into the “wrong” neighbourhood. They remember the public outcry and the concern that prevailed in the discussions that adults had. And, interestingly, each one of them fills the gaps in the other’s story, demonstrating the inter-subjective character of the construction of these memories.

Sa'ida: I was 15, I think, when this happened.

Nadia: Maybe younger.

Sa'ida: Yes, you are right.

Nadia: I remember, because my brother was the same age as they.

Sa'ida: Our parents were clearly concerned and everybody was talking about this. They tried not to talk in front of us but we all knew.

Nadia: Yes. We heard all about it from older kids at school.

Sa'ida: What a horrible thing. Mehmet, the Turkish boy who lived just round the corner from us, was badly hurt.

Nadia: I saw his face days after I had heard about it and it was unrecognizable. Such accounts are not uncommon. Many respondents seemed to have similar recollections and experiences of their own neighbourhoods being places of comfort and safety. These memories may have arisen from their own direct experience (as in the cases of Hassan and Samira, above) but may also have been the product of recollections of friends, neighbours or, sometimes, rumours (as some of the recollections of Ali indicate).

Such memories are instrumental in building a sense of community, as they provide crucial elements of a narrative web that posits the local Muslim community as a welcoming place where they do not have to endure unwelcome visibility, public scrutiny and, on occasion, aggression. Younger (primarily male) informants rely on theirs and others’ recollections to set boundaries and to define their locality as the “home turf”, a place

where they can, collectively and individually, assess, control and manage risk. Indeed, fieldwork material reveals aspects of particular geographies of locality that make sense to, and are evoked by, many Muslims, whose topographies contain objects or places that are familiar and relevant to “being Muslim”. These comprise, *inter alia*, mosques, community centres, shops, schools, other loci of collective action and sharing, local media, and the “soundscapes” all of these generate and sustain, to use a term that Hirschkind developed in his study of Muslim counterpublics in Cairo (2006). These geographies are not necessarily ones of concrete landmarks, but incorporate personal, family and community narratives bonded to the locality in question, as the above interview excerpts indicate. This is not novel, as a number of studies on youth (including Shildrick 2006; Peterson 2011) that have focused on structural factors of youth cultures, including neighbourhood residence, suggest that locality can be very influential in shaping the cultural identities and experiences of young people. But, beyond youth solidarities and subcultures, such recollections create a common stock of experience; what, following Ryan and Gamson (2006), I term common experiential and, even more so, injustice frames. The notion of frames derives from symbolic interactionism. In that theoretical context, frames evolve from collective efforts to make sense of problems; they help people “locate, perceive, identify, and label” their experience (Goffman 1974: 21). In social action research, frames are the outcome of symbolic and cultural production of political actors. According to Gamson (1995), a major proponent of the constructionist approach to framing, political actors actively construct their self-presentations so as to draw support from others. The concept of “frame”, therefore, refers to cognitive processes through which people utilize background knowledge to interpret an event or circumstance and to locate it in a larger system of meaning. Framing processes are therefore means through which actors invoke one frame or set of meanings rather than another when they communicate a message, thereby indicating how the message is to be understood. In the case of the Muslim communities in question, remembering such events or situations is essential in the development and reproduction of community cultures and identities, thus ensuring that the various ontological narratives that emanate from daily life are integrated into the public narratives generated by community institutions.

What is pertinent in the case of the young informants discussed above is the association of their memories of safety and comfort with “being amongst other Muslims”. To return to Ali’s response regarding

his neighbourhood, he continuously reminds us that his “brothers” are Muslim and that this “Muslimness” is the crucial element upon which trust is built. To be fair, Ali does recognize that his locality is mixed in terms of ethnicities and religions, and does suggest that many people he likes and trusts in his everyday encounters are non-Muslim; but still, he stresses that he trusts his friends because “they are Muslim”. The neighbourhood is, therefore, partly constructed through remembering it as a terrain that is known, welcoming and representing a set of relationships of mutuality and support, of feeling safe—associated with “being Muslim”—and, if necessary, of coming together in a moment of need or of danger.

Until the early 1970s, Europe’s urban spaces were culturally alien to their Muslim residents, as the majority of Muslim migrants did not see Europe as a new permanent home. The collective dimension of Islam, therefore, was initially confined to personal spaces of private homes, collective immigrant residences, hotel rooms and shop storerooms. In view of this lack of a “proper” Muslim space, for many informants the recognition of their neighbourhood or of their city as “home” is the product of what Barbara Daly Metcalfe has described as *Making Muslim Space* (1996)—of “populating” the localities concerned with familiar markers of their presence, of “spatializing” with their “footsteps”, as De Certeau suggests when discussing the process of kinesthetic appropriation of space (1984: 97). Indeed, the respondents’ discourses reveal aspects of particular geographies of locality that make sense to, and are evoked by, many Muslims, whose topographies contain objects or places that are memorable, familiar and relevant to “being Muslim”, such as mosques, community centres, shops, schools, other loci of collective action and sharing, local media, and the “soundscapes” all of these generate and sustain,

In common with others, Mehmet, a 39-year-old Hackney resident of nine years, born in Turkey, recalled with a sense of accomplishment the time when the Turkish community was less established in this part of London, contrasting that earlier topography of Hackney with what we could call a Muslim topography of the borough today. His account relied on his and others’ memories of Hackney when the first Turkish migrants arrived and settled. He vividly described a place that seemed devoid of any relevance and meaning to most of the first Turkish residents, and he recalled the difficulties they had in communicating in English and representing their interests and aspirations, the arduous process of establishing small basement prayer-cum-community rooms, and—eventually

graduating to grander designs—establishing community centres, and then mosques. Mehmet's reminiscences were complemented with a list of the mosques that have been built over the years—embellished with stories about the materials used, the way decisions were made about these, the importance of their visibility in the urban landscape, their openness to all Muslims—the religious classes and schools, the community advocacy centres, the new halal shops and restaurants, and the various Islamic book-shops that can be found in the area nowadays. What was of particular importance in his discourse was a story about the debates on whether the design for a local mosque should incorporate a minaret or not:

Those who were against [the minaret] did not understand that the community wanted their mosque not to be hidden away but to let people know that we are here too. This is very important ... to drive by and see a mosque that people built as a mark of their faith ...

But, perhaps more importantly, his narrative contains a story that links a past of marginalization, of aporia and invisibility, with a present of accomplishment and increased visibility. Others, too, emphasize similar tortuous, yet rewarding, routes from invisibility to finally being able to recognize their Muslim identity in the local urban landscape. Azedinne, a 33-year-old from Belgium, expresses his dismay and anger at the various political, bureaucratic and societal obstacles he and other Muslims in his own town have had to confront and negotiate in order to get permission to build a “proper” mosque that, in his opinion, constitutes a need of the Muslim community and a recognition of its presence there.

It is unbelievable that we had to struggle so much ... to argue for our right to have a “proper” mosque in a town where Muslims are so many. We will in the end overcome their objections and even build a minaret! We live here too.

The majority of my informants had stories of progressively gaining “ownership” or becoming “stakeholders” in a number of local institutions which eventually became part of the narrative fabric that makes up local European Muslim geographies. Naaz, 29 years old and from Belgium, reflects on the local struggle that took place some 15 years ago to ensure that her local secondary school became more flexible, as far as allowing Muslim girls to have an input in the school dress code was concerned:

It was a long struggle. I felt at times that this was not my school; it couldn't be because it did not accept me as I was. And when our voice was finally heard we felt that this was our school too, that this was our town as well.

Similar memories of localized mobilizations, narratives of a collective achievement—from supporting friends in the face of racist violence, to campaigning for a mosque or for greater tolerance in a local school, to securing over time appropriate care for Muslim elderly people—are prevalent in the discourses of my informants. These can be seen as memories of collective endeavours and of community accomplishment. Such talk sometimes takes the form of a rhetoric of “local patriotism”, emphasizing or recounting community achievements, investing local space with emotion and agency, but also *situating the community in memory*.

Locality, in this context of the construction of collective memories, is not merely a physical space but also a highly symbolic and often mediated domain of social action that, at least at first sight, is characterized by face-to-face interaction and a degree of familiarity that comes with it. What is more, it is a space that has an important, inherent temporal dimension, one largely constructed from these memories of “making place”, of overcoming adversity, of coming together in times of danger. In the context of European cities where secularism has not eradicated the visual elements of a long Christian tradition but tends to look with suspicion on any further markers of religious identification, this dimension of locality is becoming more important. An eloquent example of this non-physical, mediated character of local Muslim geographies, and of the role of collective memory in their building, is the case of London's Ramadan Radio, a local, short-range broadcasting station, which used to operate every year during the month of Ramadan in the borough of Tower Hamlets, and was much appreciated by many local Muslim interviewees. Ramadan Radio represented a long-gone component in the life of the local Muslim community, but memories of its impact have outlived its brief presence.

Shabina, a 23-year-old woman of mixed Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin, reflects on how this station, in many ways, provided a narrative thread, a sense of intimacy, in the construction of a cohesive locality and community.

Ramadan Radio was much nicer [than other radio stations] to listen to. It offered you the opportunity to feel you are a member of a community. For one, you listened to people you knew personally. You heard their voice on the radio and then when you rang them at home you used to say “I heard you on the radio you know” ...

Zaynab, a devout 43-year-old housewife attending a women's group meeting at the East London mosque, adds rather nostalgically to the overall perception of the decisive contribution the station made in creating a soundscape that "populated" the urban landscape.

Yes and you could listen to programmes from the local hospital, and you know the people who work there too And then it was the prayers ... there was something for everyone.

Generally, the memories associated with Ramadan Radio among its listeners were imbued with a sense of intimacy. As I have suggested elsewhere (2008), Ramadan Radio operated at what we could call the "intimate" level, as it was a very local medium aware of needs related to the intimate realm of religion, and rooted in the everyday life of a relatively small local community. In other words, Ramadan Radio has become ingrained in the collective memory of the local Muslim community and become part of the symbolic landscape of the locality—a virtual presence, despite its absence, with a very tangible impact on community life. What is more, during its operation the station was part of the local urban soundscape, in fact, a welcome addition to what many local Muslims—primarily the more devout ones—considered to be an alien soundscape devoid of the sounds that could have made it relevant to their daily lives. The idealized way of remembering Ramadan Radio's contribution to community life, just as remembering the warmth of community in all the previous cases I encountered, might conceivably not constitute a memory of a bygone past but a vision of a desired future. It might be a projection of a utopia, of what the Muslim communities in question might want to achieve: a place of equality, solidarity and safety.

POST-MEMORY: "REMEMBERING" THE EXPERIENCES OF OTHER MUSLIMS

Most informants recounted stories of other Muslims from remote localities and, more importantly, with very few exceptions, not located in their own countries of origin. This latter set of narratives are, as I will show, primarily translocal, and establish affinities with the histories/stories of significant, remote others. Although these narratives are not the product of the experiences of those who "remember" them, they nevertheless occupy a significant place in the shared stock of memories of Muslims in Europe and are frequently evoked and mobilized in tandem with other

narratives generated from the context of their everyday lives. They, in some way, constitute a type of “post-memory,” that is, a memory that consists of the adoption of the traumatic experiences—and thus also the memories—of others as one’s own, or more precisely, as experiences one might oneself have had, and of inscribing them into one’s own life story. (Hirsch 1999: 8–9; also Hirsch and Smith 2002).

One such example of “post-memory” relates to “adoption” by other European Muslims of the sense of injustice experienced by French youth residing in the *banlieues* of major French cities. A Pew Global Attitudes Survey (2006) found that awareness of the 2005 riots in the *banlieues* was relatively high among other European Muslims. The findings from discussions with my interviewees corroborated this. However, they went a step further, by providing insights into how this sympathy has been translated into vivid and durable memories. Over half of the non-French interviewees, when prompted to discuss issues of societal fairness and injustice affecting them, added to their lists of injustices directly experienced by them the inequalities and prejudice that had prompted their French counterparts to riot. Even more respondents mentioned in the same context the Muhammad cartoons published in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* on 30 September 2005, as well as earlier debates about *hijab* bans in schools and workplaces. Similarly, discussions about local acceptance or rejection of plans to build mosques or community centres almost invariably revealed that interviewees were quite aware of similar debates and conflicts in other parts of Europe. It soon became obvious that although interviewees’ nationalities and countries of residence, their ethnic or cultural differences, diverse occupational patterns, educational attainment and age may have given rise to markedly different experiences and diverse perceptions of discrimination and exclusion among this minority, the spatial and social segregation and unemployment experienced by French Muslims, the intense racism felt by many of Belgian and Dutch informants, are subsumed to an overarching perception of injustice. They considered these different experiences as part and parcel of their own history and recollection of instances of injustice. In other words, through a translocal lens (and here the media they accessed played an important role), they perceived their distinct local experiences as part of a broader stock of collective (European Muslim) memory.

The raw material for the construction of this memory of injustice is, however, by no means derived from Europe alone. Discussions and interviews revealed a quite widespread sensitivity to suffering in countries where Islam is practised by the majority or large minorities of the

population. Some of the most notable cases in this respect are Palestine, which was mentioned in highly emotional terms by an overwhelming majority of the people we talked to, closely followed by Iraq and Afghanistan, where Western countries have intervened militarily. To these can be added Chechnya, which has been subjected to several Russian military campaigns; Kashmir, whose territory is bitterly disputed by both Pakistan and India; and Bosnia, the site of bitter military confrontation among Serbs, Croats and Muslims as Yugoslavia disintegrated in the 1990s, and whose Muslim population was subjected to ruthless ethnic cleansing. Indeed, the plight of Bosnian Muslims has been a seminal moment, a key traumatic memory that intensified feelings of Muslim solidarity for many of the older people who talked to me. Magdi, a 37-year-old paramedic from Belgium, has vivid memories of the news coming from Bosnia through his television screen.

It is hard to forget the suffering of those people. I remember not bearing to watch the news. And I will never forgive the inaction of the world as a whole. People [were] being subjected to genocide just because they were Muslim. Just because they [their Christian neighbours] decided they did not have the right to be there. I was not, until then, particularly concerned about religion—my father was not that religious anyway—but I thought that this was the moment. That this is some sort of revelation, telling me that others are ready to die and they pay the price for being Muslim.

Asad, a 48-year-old West Londoner, and Islamic charity campaigner who had been a left-wing activist prior to the Bosnian conflict, also discussed the war and how he abandoned his engagement with Left politics:

How could they [Western governments] turn a blind eye to what was happening? And how could the media present their [Muslims] slaughter day in and day out? We would wait for the news, we would try to find a channel that would say it—that this was a genocide. As we could not stand the apathy around us, we decided to link up with others and start collections for our brothers and sisters. Cash, blankets, medicines, food ... A friend volunteered to drive the stuff [,] but at the end the mosque was better networked and arranged its transportation. Bosnia had a profound effect on me, my priorities ...

Empathy with fellow Muslims in such cases has a transformative effect, sometimes as dramatic as that described in Magdi's and Asad's accounts, sometimes subtler and more incremental.

This remembering of injustice makes possible the imagination of a “we”—of all those who, as we have seen earlier, adopt and build this body of post-memory. This mobilization of what is remembered is crucial to setting in motion processes of “reinterpreting the past, narrating new foundations” (Hale 1998: 6), effectively instituting, reconstituting or reconfiguring a collective identity through collective representation, as a way of repairing the tear in the social fabric.

The collective sense of injustice, and the “cultural trauma” that it entails, draws together the “multiplex strands of violence, risk and threat afflicting people’s everyday lives” (Bowman 2003: 319–320) to mobilize those who perceive themselves as affected. This construction of what Alexander, in his discussion of the notion of cultural trauma, calls the “trauma process”—that is, a crisis of meaning and identity that prompts the (re)articulation of a group’s self-definition (Alexander et al. 2004)—always engages a “meaning struggle”, a grappling with events that involves identifying the “nature of the pain, the nature of the victim and the attribution of responsibility” (ibid.). European Muslims identify with the traumatic memory of the experience of others, primarily through various media, but also through the way in which these experiences and memories are constructed by actors such as the various Muslim associations, mosques and the Muslim and non-Muslim charity sectors.⁴ Needless to say, this mass-mediated experience and memory always entails selective construction. Eyerman (1994) argues that, in such situations, the interests and desires of the affected are articulated and represented by intellectuals, in the term’s widest sense. Indeed, there is no doubt that in the case of the construction of cultural trauma among European Muslims, this memory of a profound injustice is often propagated by institutions and individuals who, either drawing their authority from institutional association or public following, have the symbolic power to articulate it. On the other hand, it is also clear that “ordinary” Muslims are increasingly playing a more active role in such processes. This is largely due to the “democratizing” impact of the technologies they utilize in their search for news, or information about “others like them”, as the use of the internet but of other media of time-space distantiation is seamlessly integrated into the lives of most informants. They have for the most part demonstrated not only familiarity with media technologies, but also the ability to skilfully navigate the rich mediascape available to them (Sofos and Tsagarousianou 2013).

There are ample indications that the construction of a Muslim identity drawing on a sense of trauma is well underway and is proving to be enduring. Clues to its durability are provided by Neal’s analysis of “national trauma” (1994)—a concept closely related to that of “cultural

trauma". Neal refers to its "enduring effects", as it relates to events "which cannot be easily dismissed, which will be played over again and again in individual consciousness", and which, with the passage of time, become "ingrained in collective memory". In the case of my informants, the mediated post-memory of suffering and discrimination becomes the subject of reflection, discussion and emotional investment. They described how such news becomes the focus of collective endeavours of search, of discovery, of anxiety and, eventually, of exchange and discussion. Peer groups, in the context of face-to-face daily interaction, but also in virtual space, often constitute a space for such exchanges, as do more formal settings, such as the mosque, the community associations, the university or college. It is in these spaces that the notion of injustice but also those of agency and identity (Gamson 1995) are understood, explained and made coherent through the means of public reflection and discourse. As Smelser (in Alexander et al. 2004) suggests, "cultural trauma" constitutes "a memory accepted and publicly given credence by a relevant membership group and evoking an event or situation which is (1) laden with negative affect, (2) represented as indelible, and (3) regarded as threatening a society's existence or violating one or more of its fundamental cultural presuppositions". It is also clear that the impact of the experience of trauma is not exhausted in the articulation of notions of injustice and harm, or the (re)articulation of identity, as Alexander further suggests. Agency springs from the realization that something needs to be done, that "brothers and sisters" need to be supported or that a voice needs to be heard.

CONCLUSION

Sandercock suggests that memory "locates us, as part of a family history, as part of a tribe or community, as a part of city building and nation-making. Loss of memory is, basically, loss of identity" (1998: 207–208). Conversely, I would argue that memory is crucial for identity formation, a highly contested terrain, the object of cultural politics seeking to shape it and appropriate it. In the preceding pages, I have tried to explore some key aspects of the politics of memory in which European Muslims are engaged and through which they articulate discourses and narratives that inform their self-definitions. I have examined aspects of the construction of historical memory that link European Muslims with a remote Islamic past in a number of ways. Despite the temporal and experiential distance that separates the present from the early Islamic era, European Muslims develop strong connections with that past, to an extent as part of their efforts to

validate their cultures and their settlement in Europe. In addition to this way of projecting their own aspirations with regard to the past, European Muslims produce narratives of a history of settlement and achievement in Europe. In this context, their narratives of inhabiting the localities where they are concentrated constitute attempts to use memory as a resource for becoming stakeholders, and countering narratives of exclusion that they face in everyday contexts. Another important aspect of the politics of memory that I have examined relates to the construction of a sense of “cultural trauma”. This is a complex and creative process of articulation of distinct memories and experiences of “other Muslims” from Europe and beyond, of “post-memory” crucial for the construction of injustice frames that facilitate the building and reproduction of identity and agency among European Muslims.

In many ways, these processes are not so much about the past as they are about the present and the future. As various individuals and groups challenge or modify hegemonic versions of the past and advance their own memory/memories and history/histories, they lay claim to the present and the future; and the attempts of European Muslims to locate themselves in the past on their own terms is in no way different, insofar as they are orientated towards endowing themselves with identities and agency.

NOTES

1. In total, 390 men and 345 women between the ages of 16 and 45 who described themselves as Muslim or of Muslim background were interviewed. Of these interviewees, the majority (595) were residents or citizens of Belgium (90), France (130), Germany (115), the Netherlands (90) and the UK (170). A further 145 interviews were conducted online with interviewees from other European countries, notably, Italy (20), Spain (15), Denmark (22), Norway (16), Sweden (22), Switzerland (20) and Austria (25). The data collection was conducted in the context of a research project on European Muslim Identities, some of the findings of which were eventually published in Sofos and Tsagarousianou (2013); however, the analysis that follows is my own.

The discussions mainly took the form of group interviews (or focus groups) and a small number of individual interviews. The sampling design was intended to avoid replicating preset definitions of what it means to be a “European Muslim”, and to reflect and “capture” instead the polysemy of the terms *Islam* and *Muslim* and the diverse experiences and practices that relate to Islam in Europe, using a combination of non-probability sampling

techniques that had the potential of better capturing the internal diversity of experience and opinion this paper has intended to chart and analyze.

2. Some of this material is very carefully and sensitively designed and, therefore, very effective in the transmission of historical information; for example, real-time strategy games such as *Quraish* (released in 2005 by Syrian *Afkar Media*), which takes place in pre-Islamic and early Islamic periods and deals with the origin and spread of Islam. Players are situated in virtual simulations of the time and, in the process, learn about pre-Islamic, Arab culture and early Islamic history, and the broader geographical, social and economic processes determining the historical spread of Islam. *Arabian Lords* (*Sadat al-sabrah*'), a real-time strategy game developed in 2007 by US *BreakAway Games* and the Jordanian studio *Quirkat*, similarly immerses the players in a carefully reconstructed medieval Arab world and provides information on the period.
3. Directed in 1976 by the late Moustapha Akkad, *The Message*, in accordance with Muslim conventions forbidding any visual depiction of the Prophet, omitted this. Instead, Akkad decided His presence was to be signified by light organ music. The director also occasionally framed the film from the Prophet's point of view as He observed the actions of his followers.
4. For more on the role of the media and the charity sector in these processes, see Sofos and Tsaragrousiou [2013](#).

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Community Life: Cultural Memory and the Construction of a Contemporary Muslim Tatar Identity in Poland

Agata S. Nalborczyk

The contemporary Polish Tartar poet Selim Chazbijewicz expresses his double identity as both Polish and Tatar in the following way:

My body is home to a Pole and a Tatar ...
In their dreams, they both sharpen their swords
Insane from poetry in the steppes of Kipchak
I use my Tatar sword to fight for Great Poland
Their shoulders are equally protected by
A wolf-skin from the woods of Lithuania. ('Tatar dream')

This essay considers how a Muslim minority in a European country has gone about shaping its modern identity and cultural memory. The minority in question differs from other frequently studied groups of Muslims in Europe that are composed either of economic migrants and refugees or their descendants; indeed it is unlike any other, for it is the Muslim Tatars who live in modern-day Poland.¹ They are group of indigenous European Muslims of Turkic origin who emigrated from their homeland—the state of the Golden Horde—six centuries ago. Since such a long time has passed since their arrival in their new home country, they are quite different to

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Crimean, Kazan, or Finnish Tatars. Unlike these other groups, the Polish Tatars went over to one of the local Slavic languages, losing their native language in the process, and they have become fully part of Polish society. Therefore, when discussing the cultural identity and memory of Polish Muslim Tatars, one must bear in mind that their cultural identity is entwined with a broader Polish cultural identity and memory. Polish society, as we know it today, only took its current shape after the Second World War. Before the war, it was much more diverse—in 1931, a total of 65 per cent of the population were Roman Catholics, 12 per cent were Orthodox, 10 per cent were Greek Catholics, and 10 per cent were Jews—and the denominational structure strongly corresponded to the ethnic structure (Garlicki 1999: 507).² In the wake of the Second World War and the Holocaust perpetrated by Nazi Germany, the largest non-Christian minority in Poland—the Jewish minority—was almost completely wiped out. Another substantial change resulted from the post-war arrangements between the Allies, which saw the incorporation of eastern parts of pre-war Poland (today's Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine) into the USSR. Poland lost the territories which were home to a number of religious and ethnic minorities, including Ukrainians, Belarusians, Karaites, and Tatars.

As a result, Polish society became much more uniform. According to the 2011 census, only 1.77 per cent of the populace gave their nationality as other than Polish, only 1.75 per cent of people were born abroad, and fully 99.8 per cent had Polish citizenship (GUS 2014: 185–189). When it came to the census questions concerning culture, 96.2 per cent used only Polish at home (GUS 2014: 190), and of those who chose to answer the question about religion, almost 96 per cent were Roman Catholics, while the next largest group was the non-affiliated with 2.64 per cent.³

Even though the region that traditionally had the highest Tatar presence, the northeast of Poland, has also traditionally been home to an above-average percentage of Orthodox and Greek Catholics, the Tatar Muslim minority of around 5000 people is still quite small in comparison to the total population of some 38 million people, the majority of whom are ethnically Polish Roman Catholics. However, besides the elements it shares with a broader Polish identity, the Tatar cultural identity also includes some significant elements such as those listed in Chazbijewicz's poem: conception of origin, the problem of national identity, and specific ethnic symbols.

In what follows I will consider the cultural and religious life of Poland's Muslim Tatars, concentrating on those aspects that have proved cru-

cial for their cultural memory and identity. First, however, I will present a brief introduction to the theory of cultural memory, which is key to understanding the Polish Tatars' continued efforts to retain their heritage and traditions, and an outline of the history of the Polish Tatar minority, its legal status, and the background to its current activities, without which the picture of their community life would be incomplete. For reasons of space, I have chosen to focus on their present cultural and religious lives, while the pre-war period is somewhat abbreviated.

CULTURAL MEMORY, REMEMBERING, AND FORGETTING

Despite its modest size, the Polish Tatar community leads a very rich cultural and religious life, especially since the democratic changes in 1989 and the development of a free society, according to Assman's observation (2011: 337) that the opportunity to work on one's own cultural memory is 'an important achievement of civil society'. For, as Assmann (2011: 336) herself states, there can be no culture 'without an active cultural memory'. The term 'cultural memory', a combination 'of memory on the one hand and socio-cultural context on the other' (Erll 2008: 4), is therefore key to understanding the Polish Tatars' interest in retaining their identity, heritage, and traditions, and not just the collective memory of the entire Polish Tatar minority, but also its individual members too, because as Olick noted, 'there is no individual memory without social experience nor is there any collective memory without individuals participating in communal life' (1999: 346).

Cultural memory operates therefore on two levels. The first, the individual memory, is cognitive. The second is related to social groups, comprising the 'media, institutions and practices, by which social groups construct a shared past' (Erll 2008: 5). Interactions take place between both levels, because collective memory does not emerge independently of collective content, and collective content is in turn a result of the individual's interactions with surrounding people and encountering the content of media he or she uses (Erll 2008: 5). Therefore it is important that the existing in the social context of cultural memory media and institutions are 'actualized by individuals, by members of community of remembrance', because in the absence of such actualization it will be defunct and have no impact on society (Erll 2008: 5). The dynamics of the remembering process (Rigney 2009: 6), which takes place within changing social frameworks by means of media externalization (from speech to writing, painting, or the

use of the Internet) seems to be of key importance here. Any community that intends to foster its cultural memory must continuously replenish its media content and activate its institutions.

Nora (1992) introduced the important term ‘sites of memory’ (meaning everything from places in literal sense to media representations, rituals, and shared beliefs), which is crucial for understanding the processes mentioned above. The sites of memory with which a community identifies are always subject to revision by social groups, who attempt to replenish or revise existing representations of the past in order to express or emphasize their identity (Olick and Robbins 1998: 122–128). Cultural memory is thus related to identity, because identity has to be ‘constructed and reconstructed by acts of memory’ (Erll 2008: 6). However, this memory, so essential for identity, is not set in stone. The phenomenon of remembering is as common as forgetting, which is, according to Assmann (2011: 335) ‘a normality of personal and cultural life’, because it is remembering that is the exception, ‘especially in the cultural sphere’, and ‘requires special and costly precautions’. Therefore, in the case of ethnic and religious minorities, especially those living scattered across a country, what is essential is not only the standard actualization of content existing ‘in the social context of cultural memory media and institutions which uphold the cultural identity of this group’ (Assmann 2011: 337), but also the reaching out to as large a number of its members as possible, in order to prevent passive forgetting and loss of identity. It is achieved with the aid of all the possible sites of memory—media, institutions, commemorative ceremonies, and ritual performances (Connerton 2011: 338). The present article thus examines how Polish Muslim Tatars make use of these sites of memory in order to preserve their cultural memory and to prevent forgetting and the loss of their identity.

WHERE DID THE POLISH TATARS COME FROM?

Polish Muslim Tatars are descendants of the Tatars of the Mongol Khanate of the Golden Horde, who were a mixture of local Turkic tribes, mainly Kipchak and Mongol invaders. They were followers of Sunni Islam, because the Khanate had adopted Islam in the thirteenth century as its state religion (Borawski and Dubiński 1986: 15), and had appeared within the borders of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the fourteenth century (Kryczyński [1938] 2000: 4–5), most of them being mercenaries, who were granted principal fiefs in return for their military service (Sobczak

1984: 25).⁴ Generally, the Lithuanian Tatars served as soldiers in separate units of light cavalry, and as a result their status was comparable to that of the Polish–Lithuanian nobility (*szlachta*) (Zakrzewski 1998: 579). Tatars also took service in the courts of the Lithuanian magnates, while others were craftsmen and translators of Oriental languages (Konopacki 2010: 42–54). According to the privileges given them by the Lithuanian Duke, they had the right to practice their religion (Borawski 1980: 43–44; Tyszkiewicz 2008: 151–152) and erect mosques (Tyszkiewicz 1989: 298–289). The number of Tatar settlers increased in subsequent centuries, and it is estimated that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Muslim population numbered as many as 25,000 (Sobczak 1984: 43–44).

The Tatars first settled in what is today Poland in the seventeenth century (Sobczak 1984: 34–38), mainly in the northeastern region (Podlachia), where in 1679 they were granted land by King John III Sobieski with the same duties and privileges as the Tatars in Lithuania (Konopacki 2010: 78; Sobczak 1987: 51–53); their descendants live in this region to this day. Because of their military service and fiefdoms, most Polish Tatars in practice also belonged to the noble class (Kryczyński [1938] 2000: 27).⁵ In 1795, Poland ceased to exist as an independent state, and its territory was divided between Russia, Prussia, and Austria-Hungary. The lands inhabited by Tatars were incorporated into the Russian Empire, and the Polish Muslims fell under Russian authority⁶ (see Nalborczyk and Borecki 2011: 345–346). In 1918, when Poland regained its independence after the First World War, the population of Polish–Lithuanian Tatars was some 5500 (Miśkiewicz 1990: 61). The reduction in numbers was caused mostly by war, starting with uprisings against Russia throughout the nineteenth century, which resulted in persecution and oppression, and then was compounded by the First World War. Another, albeit much less frequent, reason for the falling number of Tatars was voluntary Christianization. After the Second World War, Poland regained only a small part of the territories inhabited by Tatars (about 10 per cent) (Kołodziejczyk 1997: 29), because its pre-war eastern territories (part of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania) were taken by the USSR (today's Lithuania and Belarus). However, as a result of forced migration, many Muslim Tatars left the areas taken over by the USSR and moved to the Western parts of Poland's post-war territories—the lands that used to belong to Germany before the war (Miśkiewicz and Kamocki 2004: 80–83). Due to the war and these post-war migrations, the Tatar population was dispersed. Some of them fled communist rule to Western Europe; some were expelled by the

Soviets or deported to Siberia, because they were perceived by the Soviet authorities as a dangerous threat (being, like most Poles, educated and deeply patriotic); many of them served in the army and never returned. In the late 1980s, other Muslim groups arrived in Poland, mostly Arab students who decided to settle here. In the 1990s, new groups of immigrants with Muslim backgrounds came to Poland—mostly Turks, refugees from Chechnya, and the like. Following these new waves of immigration, Polish Tatars no longer constituted the majority of Polish Muslims. To be fair, the total number of all Polish Muslims is not very great—their number is estimated to be about 25,000–35,000, or 0.07–0.09 per cent of the total population.⁷ This minority consists of two major groups: Tatars (about 5000) and immigrants (mostly Arabs, Turks, and Chechens). It should also be noted, however, that some Tatars are Christian, although almost all of them have lost their Tatar identity along with their religion, and their Tatar ethnicity is visible only in physical features and family names (if at all). Recently, a few of their descendants have started to rediscover their Tatar identity, but most frequently they combine this process with (re) conversion to Islam.

Until very recently, the history of the Polish Tatars was almost purely an interest of historians, who presented it as part of the history of Poland, mostly concentrating on their military past. The result is that the literature does not offer much information on the subject of the Polish Tatars' cultural life in the past.

MUSLIM TATAR INSTITUTIONS AND COLLECTIVE CULTURAL MEMORY

The sociopolitical transformations after 1989 brought open civil society to Poland. With social activity released from state control, the Muslim Tatars were free to create new institutions and media, the things essential for the content of cultural memory (Assmann 2011: 337). Tatar organizations (most of them established after 1989) publish books and periodicals about their history and culture, and Tatars more widely create their own literature, including poetry. These activities include performing Tatar dances and songs by an art group, websites presenting Tatar history and culture, and a range of workshops, for example, on traditional Tatar cuisine.

In all this, it is the religious and the ethnocultural dimensions of the Polish Muslim Tatars' cultural memory that really stand out, in both collective and individual terms (Olick 1999: 346). Of course one should not forget that the

Muslim Tatar cultural memory on both levels, individual and collective, is a part of the broader all-Polish cultural memory, because cultural memory is related to identity (Erl [2008](#): 6), and the Polish Tatars stress the broader Polish part of their identity, describing themselves as Poles of Tatar origin or as Poles of the Muslim faith (Warمیńska [1999](#): 165–166). All the community's activities are organized by institutions 'which uphold the cultural identity of this group' (Assmann [2011](#): 337)—in ethnocultural terms, by Tatar cultural associations; in religious terms, by the Muslim Religious Union, an officially recognized religious organization—in accordance with Rigney's statement ([2009](#): 6) that any community that intends to foster its cultural memory must continuously activate the institutions. In light of this fact, the legal framework of the institutions involved in upholding the cultural identity (Assmann [2011](#): 337) of the Polish Muslim Tatars is determined by regulations concerning both relations between the Polish state and its religious denominations, and between the state and its ethnic minorities. A series of well-structured organizations are responsible for the Polish Tatars' religious and cultural life. They fall into two categories: denominational organizations, which are officially recognized by Polish state (in the shape of the Ministry of the Interior and Administration); and cultural associations, which need only be registered locally once they have fulfilled the required conditions.⁸

Religious Institutions

Tatars, Sunni Muslims, may constitute a small group among Polish Muslims today, but in the years 1918–1939, when their legal status was defined, they constituted almost the whole Muslim community in Poland. All the regulation of Muslims and Islam thus concerned them. In 1925, the Muslim Religious Union in the Republic of Poland (Muzułmański Związek Religijny w Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, or MZR) was established and a mufti was elected—a Tatar orientalist, Jakub Szykiewicz (Sobczak [2004](#): 188–189).⁹ The seat of the mufti was Vilnius, at that time a city with the most numerous Muslim community. The MZR was independent of any clerical or secular authorities. It gained the status of a legal entity, and so did all of its local communities. However, it was only in 1936 that Islam was finally given official recognition by the Polish Parliament in the Act of 21 April 1936, which defined the relationship between the state and the MZR.¹⁰ From this point on, the MZR enjoyed full rights, including financial support from the state, tax exemptions, and official recognition

of the status of the mufti, imams, and muezzins, and of the special legal status of *waqf* (see Borecki 2014: 22–23).

Apart from defining in detail the relationship between the state and Muslims represented by the MZR, the Act described the principles of the MZR's operations and the procedures for electing its authorities, imams, and muezzins. The Act set down that all Muslim officials had to hold Polish citizenship (Art. 6) and that Polish was an official language of the MZR (Art. 23). MZR officials were obliged to remain loyal citizens of the Republic of Poland, to contribute to the common good, and to obey the Constitution (Art. 9, 11, and 19) as was required of all religious groups at the time. Religious education was permitted in state schools under the generally accepted rules of education (Nalborczyk 2015: 249). The religious instruction was conducted by suitably qualified individuals, appointed by the school authorities from among people designated by the mufti. The MZR and its local communities were granted tax allowances or tax exemptions, similar to those enjoyed by other denominational organizations, whereas the head offices of the clergy and the MZR administration were to be treated on equal terms with civil service offices (Art. 41). All historic buildings belonging to the communities were to be maintained by the state (Art. 39) and the *waqf*—religious foundations, exempt from taxation and other payments (Art. 43–45). Muslims were also given the right to spiritual care in hospitals and the army (Art. 22). The MZR's activities were brought to a halt by the Second World War. The mufti was forced to declare his loyalty to the German authorities, and in the early 1940s he was appointed mufti of Reichskommissariat Ostland—the German occupation governorates of Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Belarus—although his activities were limited to a handful of interviews given to the German press (Nalborczyk forthcoming).

The communist Poland that emerged after the Second World War (later the People's Republic of Poland from 1952) was in the early stages up to 1956 a totalitarian state. The post-Stalin reforms altered some of its features, but not its dictatorial character. The scope and degree of state control over everyday life lessened, but remained far greater than in other types of authoritarian regimes. In this non-democratic state, human rights were not observed and all activities and organizations were controlled by the state. However, in 1947 the MZR was reactivated, and its name changed to the Muslim Religious Union in the People's Republic of Poland. The number of imams was insufficient (many of them had been killed during the war or, like pre-war mufti, had emigrated), many places of worship were left outside Poland's borders due to the post-war borders'

changes¹¹ (some of them demolished), and the bulk of their material culture had been destroyed (Borawski and Dubiński 1986: 171).¹² In such circumstances, some families decided to leave the western regions where the Tatars were dispersed in order to join the Tatar community in its traditional settlements in Podlachia, and especially in Białystok, where a new local Muslim community was officially established in 1961 (Miśkiewicz 1993: 97). New religious communities were soon established in Gdańsk and other cities in the western provinces, since only three pre-war local communities remained within the new Polish borders: in Warsaw, Kruszyńniany, and Bohoniki.

Like any other organization, the MZR's activities were strictly controlled by the state. However, despite this, its members managed to organize a range of cultural activities, for example, publishing periodicals, one of which was the quarterly *Życie Muzułmańskie* ('Muslim Life', published 1986–1991) with Selim Chazbijewicz as editor-in-chief. It published articles concerning Tatar history and traditions as well as subjects connected with Islam as a religion. After the political transformation of 1989, the MZR returned to its original name. It currently operates on the basis of six local Muslim communities. The oldest of them—having been established in the seventeenth century—are located in Kruszyńniany and Bohoniki; the largest is in Białystok, with one in Gdańsk and two in Warsaw.¹³ As an officially recognized denominational organization, the MZR has the right to erect mosques, to provide religious instruction in state schools, to have *waqf*, and to bury their dead according to Muslim religious regulations, to perform ritual slaughter, and, until January 2013, to issue halal certificates. The MZR is led by the Highest Muslim Board and the mufti, Tomasz Miśkiewicz, elected in 2004, for the first time since the Second World War. The seat of the mufti is in Warsaw and Białystok. He represents not only Tatars, but also other Polish Muslims in their relations with the state and with other Muslim communities at home and abroad. The MZR owns places of prayer, including purpose-built mosques, cemeteries, and other necessary buildings. It organizes not only daily and Friday prayers, but also community events during religious holidays, such as the breaking of the fast during the month of Ramadan (iftar), and Kurban Bajram, Ramazan Bajram, and Mielud (Mawlid). It organizes cultural events dedicated to Tatar traditions, including the Podlachia Days of Muslim Culture (Podlaskie Dni Kultury Muzułmańskiej) and the Tatar Culture Days (Dni Kultury Tatarskiej) with public lectures, displays of Tatar dancing, ethnic or religious songs, and Tatar food. The MZR publishes the quarterly magazine *Przegląd Tatarski* ('Tatar Review') and *Rocznik Tatarów*

Polskich ('Polish Tatars' Yearbook', since 2014). (It also used to publish the quarterly *Muzułmanie Rzeczypospolitej* ('Muslims of the Republic of Poland'.) Both journals are run by the same editorial team, but *Przegląd Tatarski* covers news and events of interest to the Muslim Tatar community, including its history and traditions, famous people, and ecumenical meetings. They also publish reviews of books concerning Tatar heritage and current affairs, as well as Muslim communities abroad. The MZR has its own website (<http://www.mzr.pl>) and receives financial support from the state for its cultural and publishing activities. Thus, besides the religious dimension, the ethnocultural dimension is also visible in the MZR's activities.

Tatars were almost the only Muslims living in Poland until the late 1980s, when Arab students started to settle in Poland in a noticeable numbers (noticeable for the whole tiny Muslim minority). This coincided with the political transformation of 1989, which was followed by a change of government system. The relations between the state and all recognized religions are now regulated by the Constitution of the Republic of Poland of 2 April 1997 and the Act on the Guarantees of Freedom of Conscience and Religion of 17 May 1989.¹⁴ The new principles for establishing and legalisation of religious communities by registering denominational organizations in the Register of the Ministry of the Interior and Administration are regulated in 1989 Act. A denominational organization can now be registered if the application is signed by at least 100 Polish citizens. Nevertheless, the Act on the Relationship between the State and the MZR of 21 April 1936 was not repealed by the Sejm (Polish Parliament), and according to Polish legislation all legislation that predates 1939 remains in force unless repealed (Borecki 2008: 73).¹⁵ Thus the MZR is still the largest and therefore the most visible Islamic religious organization, but no longer the only one. Since 1989, three orthodox Islamic organizations have been registered, the Muslim League in the Republic of Poland (Liga Muzułmańska w RP, or LM) being the only Sunni organization among them. The activities of religious communities are not financed by the state; neither does the state pay their officials' salaries, unless they teach religious education in schools or work as chaplains in the army or hospitals (Rynkowski 2005: 399).

The most active group among Sunni Muslims of immigrant background are former Arab students, present in Poland since the 1980s, and their families. It was they who were behind the establishment of the LM, for example. Although the establishment and registration of this second

Sunni religious organization remains a visible sign of the competition between Tatars and immigrants of Arab background, there are places and moments when they cooperate. They share places of worship in the cities with long-established communities with a significant number of Tatars, for example. In other cities there are almost solely immigrant Muslims, who have had to organize their own prayer halls or Islamic centres. It should be noted that of these immigrants, the Turks (mostly businessmen) have on the contrary recognized the leadership of MZR and created their own local religious community in Warsaw within the legal framework of the MZR, this despite the fact that the Polish Tatars do not speak and have never spoken Turkish as a language of their daily communication, and their contacts with Turkey were very rare (in the past they even fought against Turkish troops in Poland's many wars).

Cultural Institutions

The presence of Muslims of immigrant background has forced Poland's Tatars to redefine the religious dimension of their identity, because before their arrival being a Tatar meant being Muslim, and vice versa. Along with the religious dimension of the Muslim Tatar identity, then, the ethnocultural dimension has played an equally important role. The significance of this ethnic component may be growing because of the novelty of the presence of other Muslims, the newcomers of immigrant background, which has forced Tatars to (re)define their identity and the content of their cultural memory. This process is in accordance with Erll's statement (Erll 2008: 5) that it is important that the content of cultural memory be 'actualized by individuals, by members of community of remembrance', because in the absence of such an actualization it will have not the least impact on society. In the present case, it is cultural associations with an ethnic specificity that are involved in upholding the community's cultural identity (Assmann 2011: 337), although, as we have seen, there is an ethnocultural dimension to the MZR's activities.

Before the Second World War, in 1926, Polish Tatars had established a cultural association—the Union of Culture and Education of Tatars of the Republic of Poland (Związek Kulturalno-Oświatowy Tatarów Polskich Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej). The association operated on the basis of 20 local divisions, located in cities and villages with a considerable Tatar population (Borawski and Dubiński 1986: 159). The main purpose of the association was to collect and preserve of old documents, historic

monuments, and objects connected with Polish Tatar history and traditions. Each local division was obliged to create a library or an amateur art group, and to organize public lectures promoting knowledge of the Tatar religion and cultural heritage (Borawski and Dubiński 1986: 159). In 1929, the Tatar National Museum (Tatarskie Muzeum Narodowe) and in 1931 the Tatar National Archive (Tatarskie Archiwum Narodowe) were founded in Vilnius on the initiative of Leon Kryczyński, an important member of the association (Tyszkiewicz 2002: 143–145). The association started to publish its own magazines: in 1932 the academic *Rocznik Tatarski* ('Tatar Yearbook') and in 1934 the more general quarterly *Życie Tatarskie* ('Tatar Life').¹⁶ The activities of the association were brought to a halt by the Second World War, and were not resumed under the Communist regime.

The situation changed after the political reforms of 1989, which brought Polish citizens real freedom of association. Relations between the state and ethnic minorities are now regulated by the Act on National and Ethnic Minorities and Regional Languages of 6 January 2005. Tatars are mentioned in the Act and are recognized as an ethnic minority.¹⁷ Article 18 of the Act states that, 'Public authorities shall be obligated to take appropriate measures in order to support the activity aimed at protection, maintenance and development of cultural identity of the minority'.¹⁸ The authorities are thus bound to finance the cultural activities of ethnic minorities, including the publication, preservation, or broadcast of books, journals, films, video and sound recordings, and television and radio programmes, the protection of places associated with the minorities, libraries and the documentation of their cultural and artistic life, education, and the promotion of knowledge about them. Thus according to the provisions of the 2005 Act, the state is entitled and even obliged to give financial support to ethnic minorities, and for this reason, a number of activities and publications by Polish Tatars include the adjective 'Tatar', not 'Muslim'.

In 1992, not long after the democratic changes of 1989, a new association was founded to revive Tatar cultural heritage—the Union of Tatars of the Republic of Poland (Związek Tatarów Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej), which has tried to continue the tradition of the pre-war organization. Three important Tatar personalities were behind it: Maciej Musa Konopacki, Tatar writer and journalist; Stefan Mustafa Mucharski, social activist; and Selim Chazbijewicz, poet, academic, and journalist (it is his poem quoted at the beginning of this essay). The Union, which comprises

three local autonomous divisions (Bohoniki, Podlachia, and the north-western division in Gdańsk), receives financial support from the Ministry of Interior and Administration, in accordance with the Act of 2005.

The Union organizes academic and general-public conferences, creating an opportunity for the dispersed Tatar community to meet and for the younger generation to get acquainted with the history and tradition of their forefathers. It also offers public lectures on Tatar history and heritage to a broader, non-Tatar audience. Some of the lectures are by professional academics, such as the young Tatar historian Artur Konopacki; some are more popular in character. It depends on the audience and the subject. The Union's primary publication is *Rocznik Tatarów Polskich* ('Polish Tatars' Yearbook'). First published in 1992, it is devoted to scientific, cultural, and social aspects of past and current Tatar culture in Poland and Eastern Europe. In addition, it has its own book series, which now runs to some 20 titles, originally published as supplements to the yearbook. The long-standing editor-in-chief of the journal is Selim Chazbijewicz. However, due to organizational and financial problems, the yearbook is now published by the MZR. The Union also maintains contacts with Tatar organizations in neighbouring countries such as Lithuania or Belarus—the Polish language is mostly used by their counterparts abroad, because almost all Tatars in these countries are part of the Polish-speaking minority.

In 2008, a new cultural association was established in Sokółka, the Local Activist Group Tatar Trail (Lokalna Grupa Działania Szlak Tatarski).¹⁹ The association undertakes activities on a local level only, within the local authorities of Sokółka, Szudziałowo, Krynki, Kuźnica, and Sidra—located along the historical swathe of Tatar settlements. It encourages domestic tourism by means of commemorative plaques and information stands. The information given there describes historic monuments such as mosques and cemeteries, placing them within the Polish historical context or stressing their place in the natural landscape. However, the main purpose of this association is to organize activities in support of the development of rural regions, including assistance in applying for financial support from EU programmes promoting the activation of local citizens and European integration. It is thus one of the main organizers of cultural and academic events dedicated to Polish Tatar traditions, such as the Summer Academy of Polish Tatars (Letnia Akademia Wiedzy o Tatarach), which was held for the eighteenth time in 2016. It is an event that combines cultural, family-oriented, and academic activities, although it must be admitted that in some cases its

lectures are more popular than scholarly in character. Another event is the annual International Competition in Horse Archery of Polish Tatars (Międzynarodowe Zawody Łucznictwa Konnego Tatarów Polskich), which in 2010 was held together with the Lithuanian Tatars. The association continues to publish the pre-war quarterly *Życie Tatarskie* (<http://zycietatarskie.pl>), which it resumed in 1998.

In 2000, a group of young Tatars in Białystok led by Halina Szahidewicz (the long-standing president of the local Muslim religious community) formed an art group called Buńczuk (to mark Tatar military tradition, the group was named for the bunchuk, a piece of horse or yak-tail attached to the top of a pole used instead of a flag by the Tatar army and later by Tatar soldiers in the Polish and Lithuanian forces). Its members perform traditional Tatar dances, recite poetry (sometimes even selected Suras from the Qur'an), and sing old songs. Buńczuk performs at every important Tatar event all over Poland, including the Podlachia Bajram Days, Sabantuy festivals, the celebrations of the 330th anniversary of the first Tatar settlement on Polish soil, and the visit to the Polish President for the Polish Mufti to receive the Gold Cross of Merit in 2011.

The group is an example of a (re)invented cultural memory—Polish Tatars have lost their traditional dress, like their dancing and singing, so Halina Szahidewicz, the founder and until recently manager of the group, brought in a professional dancer from Crimea to teach Tatar dances to the group. The task in itself was difficult, as the young dancers did not speak Russian, Ukrainian, or Crimean Tatar. When the teacher returned home, the older and more experienced dancers passed on their skills and knowledge to new members of the group, and even invented new choreography. In 2011, the group invited other foreign teachers to join them for a short period: Achmed Taschaev, a choreographer and director of a Chechen children's and youth ensemble Lovzar; and Arzy Osmanova, a Crimean Tatar doing cultural studies in Warsaw. The costumes worn by the dancers were brought from Crimea and Bashkiria by Szahidewicz.

All these activities, in the interwar period and now, should be viewed as measures to foster the cultural memory of Tatars by replenishment of the media content (Rigney 2009: 6), but also by the reaching out to as large a number of the community as possible, in order to prevent passive forgetting and the loss of identity (Assmann 2011: 337).

SITES OF MEMORY

In order to maintain and develop their cultural memory, Polish Muslim Tatars use what Nora (1992) calls sites of memory. These can be places in the literal sense, but also rituals such as commemorative ceremonies or performances (Connerton 2011: 338), shared beliefs, or media representations. The sites of memory with which a community identifies are very often subject to revision by social groups in attempt to replenish or revise existing representations of the past in order to express or emphasize their identity (Olick and Robbins 1998: 122–128), but in the case of the Polish Tatars some of them—such as mosques and cemeteries—remain unchanged, and are simply maintained because they anchor communal practices and solidarities, and constitute a visible sign in the surrounding landscape. Some of the other sites of memory, including rituals, also remain unchanged; as in the case of religious ceremonies and festivals, some of them have been (re)invented in order to meet the needs of the (re)defined Polish Tatar identity.

Mosques and cemeteries

The Polish Tatars' community life has always been centred on mosques and prayer houses (Pol. dom modlitwy). In Poland in the interwar period, there were 17 purpose-built mosques and 2 prayer houses (Kryczyński [1938] 2000: 162–163) in regions of traditional Tatar settlement. Most of these buildings were erected in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. There was no mosque in the capital for the newest Muslim community, so in 1928 the Warsaw Muslims established the Mosque Building Committee (Komitet Budowy Meczetu); they did not manage to start construction before the outbreak of the war, however (Miśkiewicz and Kamocki 2004: 93–94; see also Nalborczyk 2011b: 185–186).

Due to the devastation of war and post-war border changes, there are now only two historic, purpose-built mosques belonging to the MZR within Poland's borders—in Kruszyniany (dating back to the eighteenth century) and Bohoniki (from the nineteenth century)—and only one new one, in Gdańsk (inaugurated in 1990). The biggest Muslim community, which is in Białystok, has only a prayer house at its disposal, as do the other communities. Local Tatar communities organize their religious and cultural activities mostly in mosques or prayer houses or in close by, as for example in Białystok (the Podlachia Days of the Muslim Culture)

or in Kruszyniany (the Tatar Culture Days). In places where there is no Muslim religious instruction in state schools due to an insufficient number of pupils, religious instruction is provided in mosques, prayer houses, or Islamic cultural centres.

Every cemetery (*mizar*, *miziar*, or *zireć*) in a traditional Muslim community plays an important role. There are historic *mizars* still in use in Kruszyniany (the latest grave dates back to the beginning of the eighteenth century), Bohoniki, and Warsaw (the so-called Tatar Cemetery, established in 1867).²⁰ Polish Tatars, like their Christian neighbours, meet at the cemeteries to pray for the dead. Tatar graves are made of stone with inscriptions such as the shahada (the Muslim profession of faith) and the basmala (the invocation of the name of God).

Commemorative Ceremonies and Ritual Performances

Religious holidays and ceremonies are equally important sites of cultural memory for Polish Tatars, being an expression of the religious dimension of the Muslim Tatar identity. Polish Tatars are Sunni of the Hanafi madhhab, so their most important religious holidays are Ramazan Bajram and Kurban Bajram—they use names of Turkic origin for these festivals, because until recently the only Muslims they had contact with were of Turkic background. Interestingly, in spite of being Sunni, Tatars traditionally celebrate some Shi'a holidays such as Miellud Bajram (the birthday of the Prophet) and Aszura Bajram (aka Aszurejny Bajram) (see Borawski and Dubiński 1986: 191–192). No one knows why Tatars, who did not have any contacts with Shi'a Muslims, celebrate these festivals. However, due to the contacts with Sunni Muslims of Arabic background, this last Bajram is no longer observed as often.

All celebrations start with a prayer, after which the imam recites a prayer over food (called *sadoga*, recited mostly over sweets, cakes, and fruit), which is then shared out among those present. After the prayers, they return home for a festive meal consisting of traditional dishes, and in the afternoon visit a cemetery to pray for the dead—they touch the grave and recite the *sialam* (from the Arabic *salam*) to the dead. For the most important religious holidays, they attend the historic mosques in Kruszyniany and Bohoniki to celebrate together as their forebears used to in the old days. This is especially true of Kurban Bajram, when a sacrificial animal (usually a cow or a sheep) is slaughtered and its meat distributed to

the community. Polish Tatars also observe their own specific religious rituals, connected with the most significant stages in human life, and involving the whole local community—the majority of Tatars share family ties. These rituals are also marks of their distinct Muslim Tatar cultural memory, and distinguish them from more recent Muslim arrivals in Poland. First there is the *azan*, a naming ceremony for newborns. The baby is dressed in white and laid on a table facing Mecca, next to the Qur'an, candles, bread, salt, and water. The imam says a prayer, pronounces the baby's name, and then takes the baby's index finger and says the profession of faith seven times. Next, holding the baby in his hands, he recites the *azan* (Kryczyński [1938] 2000: 210–211). Although marriage is only recognized if a civil ceremony at a state registry office has taken place, many in the Tatar community consider a traditional Muslim wedding to be a very important ceremony, and their number is rising. Tatar nuptials start with a common prayer of men led by the imam in the groom's house. Then all the guests go to the bride's house, where the ceremony takes place. The imam stands at the head of a table, laid with a white tablecloth and decorated with myrtle, candles, water, bread, and salt. The young couple stand on a sheepskin (a symbol of wealth) facing Mecca, and the ceremony begins. The bride's head is covered with a veil (*zabaremnienie*) and all the guests congratulate the newlyweds (Borawski and Dubiński 1986: 192–193). The whole wedding procession moves on to the groom's house for the wedding reception. The final ritual is the funeral. The dead must be buried within 24 hours, but sometimes a coffin must be used under health regulations. The body is washed (*guśl*, from the Arabic *ghusl*) and wrapped in a green shroud. The night before the interment, men gather at the house around the body to pray and recite the Qur'an. During prayers they are offered *syta*—a traditional drink of water with honey. After the burial, the immediate family is obliged to offer *sadoga* to those who have attended the ceremony—homemade sweets and cakes (see Borawski and Dubiński 1986: 193–194).

There are also non-religious performances that serve as sites of memory, but some of them were (re)invented or derived from other Tatar communities. One of these traditional Polish Tatar events is Sabantuy, a rural festival. The name itself means the feast of the plough and the holiday is a combination of fieldwork celebrations, dancing, and singing. The celebrations feature feats of skill, archery competitions, horseraces, as well as cookery demonstrations and food tasting. Sometimes, for example, as

in 2008 in Gdańsk, a scholarly conference is organized or papers are read popularizing Tatar history, religion, and tradition. In 2011 something similar was organized in Trakai, Lithuania, as the Seventh International Baltic Tatar Holiday of Sabantuy. During Sabantuy, Tatars welcome other ethnic minorities to Kruszyńniany for the festivities—for example, in 2012 Kashubians, Roma, and Chechens; and in 2014, Jews from Ukraine. These festivals are often accompanied by national festivals of Tatar cuisine. The Sabantuy holiday is celebrated by all Tatars; however, until recently, it had been forgotten in Poland. It was only very recently, and thanks to numerous contacts with Tatar communities in Belarus, Crimea, and Tatarstan, that its celebrations have been revived and reconstructed. This fact shows the transnational character of the politics of cultural memory—Tatar communities pool their resources across borders to reclaim practices that may have lost their importance, relevance, or meaning. It also means that the Polish Tatar community can overcome the disadvantage of its small size through its contacts with other Tatar communities in other countries, thanks to the communication and travel possibilities offered to them by the democratic changes of 1989.

Among the traditional Polish Tatar cultural performances are the public dances organized for Muslim holidays. The first dances were held at the end of the nineteenth century, and after the First World War they began to be known as Tatar balls. These balls played an important role in the social life of young Tatars, because of the community's preference for endogamous marriages. Tatar balls were supposed to help young people make friends and possibly meet a future spouse. Usually organized by the Union of Culture and Education of Tatars of the Republic of Poland, they were held not only during religious holidays, but also over the summer, to celebrate the anniversary of opening a local library, during harvest festivals, or to round off a gathering (Miśkiewicz and Kamocki 2004: 148). They were organized in restaurants, local fire stations, and even in private houses (Warمیńska 1999: 158). These occasions did not differ from any others balls in Poland or Lithuania, and the participants wore standard evening dress (Miśkiewicz and Kamocki 2004: 148).

The music for the Tatar balls varied. It was largely Polish and included folk music, but there were compulsory elements such as the waltz and, later, the tango. The grandest balls would open with a polonaise, a traditional Polish dance. Dance bands were hired, or out in the country local musicians would provide live music. In Słomim, it was usual to invite a military band to play at major balls. There were attempts, mostly in Warsaw

by Tatar emigrants from Russia, to introduce Russian folk melodies from Crimea and the Volga valley, but this met with a lukewarm reception from the Polish Tatars (Miśkiewicz and Kamocki 2004: 149).

After the Second World War, the balls were restarted and played the same role as before. From the 1960s on, grand balls started to be organized in Białystok and were attended by whole families (Warمیńska 1999: 159); the balls in the 1990s were very often attended by city mayors and voivodes (Miśkiewicz and Kamocki 2004: 149–150). In 1995, a grand New Year's ball was organized in Białystok to ring in 1997 and to celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the founding of the MZR. The organizing committee invited Tatars from all over Poland, Lithuania, and Belarus. Tatar dances after the Second World War were no different from any others balls organized in Poland as far as the music and dancing was concerned. The only difference was in the food—no pork and no alcohol was served.

The tradition of holding balls died out in the early years of the twenty-first century but has recently been revived. In Białystok, on 6 July 2016, a ball was held on the first day of the Ramazan Bajram holiday as part of the programme of the Eleventh Podlachia Bajram Days. Representatives of the Tatar community gathered at a local restaurant and danced to music typically played at Polish receptions—universal favourites and traditional Polish melodies as well as popular contemporary songs. Apart from a few women in hijabs, most guests wore clothes typically worn by Polish people on such occasions. The MZR mufti and his wife were among the most prominent figures to attend, and this and subsequent balls have been enjoyed by the majority of the Polish Muslim Tatar community.

An important element in the cultural memory of Polish Tatars is the military service of their ancestors. Most of the first Tatars who settled in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and then in Poland were soldiers and served in their own units of cavalry. This military involvement is one of the features that is stressed by Tatars today, because it is evidence of their loyalty towards their home country. It is also a common subject of lectures delivered during various cultural and religious events, as well as in publications of various kinds. The weapons Tatars used for centuries were traditional and characteristic—curved swords and bows—and they were well known for their extraordinary skill in fighting on horseback. Thus horse and archery shows are common at gatherings devoted to Tatar culture and traditions, featuring Tatar saddles and bows, and men and women in traditional Tatar clothes or cavalry uniforms. The audience is given the opportunity to test their skills in the use of a Tatar bow.

Thanks to such events, young Tatars have the opportunity to learn about a now distant part of their tradition, which is clearly different to that of the rest of Polish society. Anything but distant, however, is traditional Tatar cuisine and the preparation of Tatar dishes, which also constitute one of the crucial rituals constructing the Tatar cultural memory. Tatar cuisine is a result of a marriage of dishes made by the nomadic peoples of the steppes with local ingredients handed down during the centuries of the Tatar presence in Poland and Lithuania. One of the results is goose lard. Tatar specialties still include various types of dumplings so typical of nomadic cuisine—baked (*kibiny*, *cebulniki*, *jeczpoczmake*), fried (*czebureki*, *piekremiacze*), or boiled (*kartoflaniki*, *manty*). In some cases, the dishes have lost their original names, having taken new ones derived from local languages (*piekrekaczownik*, *cebulniki*), but some traditional names have survived (*czak-czak* or *czeburek* can be found in other Tatar communities).

The composition of Tatar dishes shows clear signs of their Muslim roots—none of them include pork and no alcohol is used. Some of the traditional Tatar dishes or drinks accompany religious festivals. Tatar *halva*, made from honey, flour, and butter, is often served at weddings and birthdays or as *sadoga* (Miśkiewicz 2009: 127). Another dish traditionally associated with watching over the dead is *dżajma*, a thin cake fried in mutton fat or butter and soaked in honey. *Kolduny*, stuffed dumplings served in a broth, are offered as main course, and are an indispensable component of the festive dinner for every Bajram, wedding reception, or *azan* (Miśkiewicz 2009: 124–126). Drinking water is usually served with honey and lemon (*syta*). All religious or cultural gatherings end with a spread of traditional Tatar dishes to taste, including the Podlachia Muslim Cultural Days, any Sabantuy celebrations, workshops for children and young people, prayers for peace in Kruszyniany or Bohoniki, and other high holy days and holidays. In many Tatar homes, traditional dishes are prepared every day, not only for festive occasions, and the recipes passed from one generation to the next. The single most active figure in the promotion of Tatar cuisine is Dżenneta Bogdanowicz from Kruszyniany, a teacher of Tatar cooking (as part of the Festival of Tatar Culture and Tradition) and organizer of community cooking events.²¹ There is also a wide range of cooking competitions—in May 2011 during the Sabantuy celebrations, for example, the First National Festival of Tatar Cuisine was held in Kruszyniany, along with a competition for the best *kolduny* and *czebureki* and a dumpling-eating contest.

The Media

Media representations are another type of memory site. The journals and books published by Polish Muslim Tatar institutions have been already mentioned, but it is very interesting to note how fast a small minority like the Tatars will take to new media, in the most recent instance the Internet, to spread information about their history, traditions, and customs.

There are several websites dedicated to Tatar history, culture, and traditions, run either by official organizations, whether religious or cultural, or by private people. The MZR has two websites devoted to Tatar issues. Of these, *Tatarzy w Polsce* ('Tatars in Poland', <http://www.tatarzy.pl>) concerns the history of Tatar military service in the Polish army, with biographical entries about people of Tatar descent who have been prominent figures in Polish history. It also briefly discusses the Podlachia Tatar Trail, listing local Tatar cemeteries. Moreover, the website gives an overview of the Tartar Muslim magazines currently on the market, and there is a poetry corner devoted to verse written by Tatars or on subjects close to Tatars, as well as a photo gallery presenting various events related to the Tatar minority. One can also find charts presented at an exhibition about Polish Tatars and news about Polish Tatars and Muslims. The website was created with the financial support from Podlaskie Voivodeship Marshal's Office in Białystok, the body that supports all ethnic minorities living in the voivodeship.

Another portal administered by the MZR is *Podlaski Szlak Tatarski* ('Podlachia Tartar Trail', <http://www.szlaktatarski.pl>), which is a presentation of the villages and towns connected with Tatar history or their present lives in the Podlasie region. The site provides a detailed description of the origin of the Polish Tatars. The project was financed by the Ministry of Interior and Administration under the law that requires the ministry to support ethnic minorities through its specialized unit, the Department of Religious Denominations and National and Ethnic Minorities. The Tatars in Poland website (<http://www.tataria.eu>), run by a Tatar, Michał Mucharek Adamowicz, focuses on the presentation of the cultural links between Polish Tatars and other Tatar communities. One can also find a list of publications in the Polish language on Tatar history, culture, customs, and beliefs, as well as poetry and information about current cultural events in Poland and Lithuania—today's Lithuanian Tatars being part of the Polish language minority, and most of them being members of the same families, the only difference being the name changes imposed by the

Lithuanian authorities to reflect Lithuanian language requirements. There are also commercial websites, of course, such as the agrotourism business in Kruszyniany, one of the traditional Tatar settlements, called Tatarska Jurta ('A Tatar Yurt', <http://www.kruszyniany.pl>), run by Dżenneta and Mirosław Bogdanowicz. Apart from the information about their business, the website also provides a great deal of information about Tatar traditions and history, Islam as a religion, history, and a description of the mosque in Kruszyniany (the oldest Polish mosque, built in the eighteenth century). Dżenneta Bogdanowicz being a very active promoter of Tatar culinary traditions, there is also an exhaustive list of traditional dishes.²²

All Tatar organizations have their own websites too. The most extensive is the MZR's (<http://www.mzr.pl>), which includes material related to the Muslim religion, the mufti's announcements (the date of the commencement of Ramadan, for example), and information about pilgrimages to Mecca, as well as information concerning Tatar history and traditions (such as the history of the field imams in the Polish army). The website <http://bibliotekatatarska.pl> also offers current and past issues of its journals for download, including as *Przegląd Tatarski*, *Rocznik Tatarów Polskich* and *Muzułmanie Rzeczypospolitej*. The Bohoniki local religious community (<http://www.bohoniki.eu>), meanwhile, apart offers the standard information one might expect, but also the history of the Tatars in Poland, and more specifically of its mosque, built in the nineteenth century, and the local cemeteries. The website of the Association of Tatars of the Republic of Poland (<http://ztrp.org>) is mainly devoted to the affairs of the organization, but frequently carries news of events promoting the traditions and culture of Polish Tatars.

Looking at the variety of websites run by Polish Tatars, it can be stated that all of them, whether their focus is ethnocultural or religious, contain information about history and traditions of Polish Tatars and their religion. These new media constitute not only new modes of expression, but they also help to reach a greater number of young people and give them a chance to express their own vision of Tatar cultural memory.

LOSS OF IDENTITY

Younger generations of Polish Muslim Tatars sometimes have little contact at home with the customs of their ancestors. To counter this, the Tatar community institutions—whether the MZR or the cultural associations—do their best to preserve the cultural memory of Polish Tatars and prevent passive forgetting and the loss of their identity (Assmann 2011: 337)

among coming generations. One of the institutions engaged in preserving cultural memory is Islamic religious education delivered by MZR local communities. Under the communist regime, Islamic religious instruction was only provided in private houses by imams or others with an education in religious matters. As part of their religious education, children were taught the history and traditions of the Polish Tatars. In 1990, the Ministry of Education restored religious instruction in state schools (Rynkowski 2005: 428), and according to a decree issued in 1992, each officially recognized denominational organization was entitled to teach its religion in state schools.²³ In 1992, the MZR started inter-school classes in Białystok—the largest city in the area with the highest concentration of Tatars in Poland. In other cities, Islamic religious education is now provided in Islamic centres (in Warsaw, for example). In 2009, a team of imams, teachers, and educators drew up a new curriculum (see Nalborczyk 2011a: 186 ff.). The general aims of Muslim instruction, as defined in the curriculum, are not only reading the Qur'an and other sources of knowledge about Islam and learning to pray, but also acquiring a knowledge of Tatar cultural, religious, and ethnic heritage. Thus, religious instruction for Polish Tatars is an important means of preserving and handing down their traditions and history—the same goal that was fulfilled by the Islamic religious education for young Tatars in the interwar period (Nalborczyk 2015).

Also working against the threat of forgetting and loss of identity are various workshops for young people. Primarily organized by the local branch of the MZR in Białystok, many of these projects receive financial support from local and regional authorities, such as Białystok City Council and the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. During these workshops, children and young adults are taught Tatar dances, decorative embroidery on traditional Tatar dress, and how to prepare traditional Tatar dishes. Sometimes the workshops are accompanied by a theatrical performance by the participants or by lessons in conducting prayer (although only for the boys). Each workshop ends with a presentation of newly acquired skills to the participants' parents and guests from City Hall. The organizers are usually leading women in the community: the long-standing president of the Białystok community, Halina Szahidewicz; the popularizer of Tartar cuisine, Dżenneta Bogdanowicz; and Anna Mucharska, a new leader of the Buńczuk dancing group and a person responsible for organizing the Islamic religious instruction in Białystok.

These activities directed at the younger generation extend outside Poland's borders—in July 2012, for example, the International Tatar Youth Camp was organized for young Tatars not only from Poland, but also from Lithuania, Latvia, Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia. The aim of this camp was to integrate young Tatars from neighbouring countries and to disseminate Tatar history and traditions among them. Teaching young Tatars about the traditions of their ancestors is not the only aim of the workshops—they also serve to bring people together and integrate the young Tatar community.

CONCLUSIONS

In spite of their modest number, the ethnic and religious minority of Polish Tatars leads a rich cultural and religious life thanks to very active religious and cultural organizations. Some of them are relatively old, like the MZR, founded in 1925. They publish their own periodicals dedicated to Polish Tatar religion and history, literature, and traditions. Books describing Tatar heritage, especially those dealing with military history or modern Tatar poetry that uses elements of the Tatar past and ethnic origins by the likes of Selim Chazbijewicz, are very popular among members of the Tatar community. Certainly, it seems that their efforts in the field of cultural memory, very much part of the memory industry and considerably intensified in the last two decades, are a vigorous response to a general 'fear of forgetting' (Huyssen 2000: 28–29, 36), which stems from the fact that traditions tend to be atrophied by modernization, and a disturbance of 'stable and lasting life experiences' leads to a loss of identity (Lübbe 1983). The Tatars' activities express a conscious need to protect this identity through 'temporal anchoring' (Huyssen 2000: 37).

Ever since the Second World War, Polish Tatars have been affected by passive forgetting, scattered across the country as they were, and focused on settling down in a new place, under the new conditions of a communist state, having lost the material touchstones of memory in the wake of the war and the subsequent migration from the countryside to urban areas. These were thus 'passive forms of cultural forgetting, non-intentional acts', unlike in the USSR where Muslim Tatars had active acts of forgetting forced upon them, which were 'violently destructive when directed at ... a persecuted minority' (Assmann 2008: 334). The Soviet authorities razed mosques, closed cemeteries, and forbade all religious and cultural activities in present-day Belarus and Lithuania (a policy directed against all

religions, not only Islam, because of the deeply ingrained anti-religionism of the Soviet regime); but nothing like that happened in Poland.

Collective memory creates versions of the past according to a community's present knowledge and needs (Erll 2008: 5). After 1989, the Polish Tatars felt the need to build up their cultural memory in the social sphere, so they turned to media, institutional, and revitalization practices that build this memory. What has been forgotten does not have to be lost forever, and work on building 'collective memory defines and supports the cultural identity of a group' (Assmann 2011: 337). The Polish Tatars were helped on their way by new possibilities in the preservation of memory—new media, enabling its accumulation and transmission, and far greater social mobility (Huyssen 2000: 37), which facilitated closer contacts within Poland, as well as with Muslim Tatars from neighbouring Lithuania, and even the United States and the United Kingdom, with the descendants of family members who had left Poland after the Second World War. Memory discourses have gone global, although they remain linked to histories of states and national groups, and modern technologies allow access to ever-increasing data resources (Huyssen 2000: 26–27). At the same time, this mobility has seen new Muslims arrive in Poland, and this too has compelled Tatars to define their identity more carefully and replenish its cultural substance.

In Poland, the global rise of mobility coincided with the democratic transformation of 1989, which enabled the Polish Tatars to take full advantage of it. As Assmann observes (2011: 337), the opportunity to work on one's own cultural memory is 'an important achievement of civil society'. These alterations in Poland made a civil society possible, because they freed the country from state control and allowed the Muslim Tatars to create new institutions and the media which are essential for the content of cultural memory. As a result of the efforts of their institutions and media, Polish Tatars came to focus on Islam and the Tatar ethnos as the two most important dimensions of their identity. Part of the community life of Sunni Muslim Polish Tatars is celebrating the main Islamic festivals such as Ramazan Bajram, and some special ones, such as Aszura Bajram or *sadoga*, which are celebrated according to old customs, even though this is not in agreement with mainstream Sunni traditions. Equally, they also observe typical Tatar ceremonies such as the rural festival of Sabantuy, or take care to foster traditional Tatar dishes, dances, and handicrafts. Polish Tatar women play a very important role in preserving the cultural memory of the Tatar Muslim minority, and are essential to the organization of all kinds of religious and cultural activities.

It is in the nature of contemporary media that it gives ‘rise to assumptions that—today perhaps more than ever—cultural memory is dependent on media technologies and the circulation of media products’ (Erll 2008: 9). Certainly, in spite of being a traditional minority, Polish Tatars took rapidly to new means of communication such as the Internet to transmit their cultural heritage and religious traditions. In fact, they have utilized the new media more and more, proving that their activities are part of the global cultural memory process, even though they are concentrated on the past. Yet, in their own description, they are Europeans, or Poles with distinct ethnic roots or from another point of view—traditional European Polish Muslims.

NOTES

1. Tatars with the same historical and ethnic background live now also in Lithuania and Belarus.
2. Of the Greek Catholics, 88 per cent were Ukrainian, while the Orthodox Church included Ukrainians (42.9 per cent), Belarusians (34.1 per cent), and Russians (1.5 per cent) (Garlicki 1999: 507).
3. Followed by the Orthodox (0.45 per cent), Jehovah’s Witnesses (0.39 per cent), Lutherans (0.2 per cent), Greek Catholics (0.09 per cent), and others (0.13 per cent) (GUS 2014: 192).
4. The Kingdom of Poland and the Great Duchy of Lithuania were first united under a common ruler in 1386.
5. In the second half of the seventeenth century, their status already equalled that of the Christian Polish–Lithuanian nobility (Borawski 1986: 178–180).
6. For more details see Nalborczyk and Borecki (2011: 345–346).
7. The Polish national population census does not include a question about religion; therefore it is necessary to rely on estimates, which differ depending on the source.
8. Act of 7 April 1989 on Associations, Dz. U. 2001, nr 79 poz. 85.
9. For Szyrkiewicz, see Nalborczyk (forthcoming).
10. For the passage of the Bill, see Sobczak (2004: 173–174).
11. After the Second World War, Poland regained only a small part of the territories inhabited by Tatars (about 10 per cent) (Kołodziejczyk 1997: 29). The eastern territories that belonged to Poland before the war were taken by the Soviet Union (the Lithuanian and Belorussian Soviet republics). However, as a result of migration programmes, many Muslim Tatars were

- forced to leave the lands taken over by the Soviet Union and move to the western parts of the Polish, which used to belong to Germany before the war (Miśkiewicz and Kamocki 2004: 80–83).
12. Neither was the level of religious education particularly high, which was partly a result of Poland's isolation from countries where there were centres of education in Muslim theology. For years, the imams were recruited solely from Tatars educated before the War (Borawski 1986: 307–308).
 13. Białystok had 2000 members (Miśkiewicz and Kamocki 2004: 84).
 14. Dz. U. 2005, nr 231 poz. 1965.
 15. See Nalborczyk and Borecki (2011: 351).
 16. Three issues in the years 1932–1938 and 69 issues in the years 1934–1939, respectively.
 17. Dz. U. 2005 nr 17 poz. 141. Although Polish Tatars lost their language in the sixteenth century and now speak Polish, a translation of the Act into the Tatar language is available at the Ministry of Interior and Administration website, <http://www.mniejszosci.narodowe.mac.gov.pl/download/86/12631/tatarski.pdf>, accessed 24 March 2016.
 18. The Ministry of Interior and Administration translation into English is available at <http://www.mniejszosci.narodowe.mac.gov.pl/download/86/12617/zweryfikowana1.pdf>, accessed 24 March 2016.
 19. <http://www.szlaktatarski.org.pl>.
 20. There are also several closed *mizars* in places where the Tatar minority has vanished.
 21. Dżenneta Bogdanowicz is a television cook who stars in programmes devoted to Polish regional cuisine. It was thanks to her campaign that *pierekaczewnik* was awarded the Traditional Specialities Guaranteed label given to products protected by EU law.
 22. Charles, Prince of Wales, visited Tatarska Jurta during his visit to Poland and tasted some of the Tatar dishes prepared by Dżenneta Bogdanowicz.
 23. Ordinance of the Minister of Education of 14 April 1992 on organizing religious education in public schools and kindergartens, Official Journal of Law, 1992, no. 36, it. 155 (Dz. U, 1992, nr 36, poz. 155). If there are seven or more pupils of one (officially recognized) denomination in a class, religious instruction should be organized for them by the school, in the school building (Art. 2 § 1). If there are between three and seven pupils of one denomination in one school, religious instruction should be organized by the school and the religious community as an inter-school group (Art. 2 § 2). If there are fewer than three pupils of one denomination, the religious community is responsible for their religious education (Borecki 2008: 33–34).

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Experience and Expression: Aleksandar Hemon, Fiction, and (Dis)placement

Catharina Raudvere

The war in ex-Yugoslavia in the 1990s and its aftermath have been an obvious theme for Bosnian fiction writers, whether based in Bosnia or in diaspora (Wachtel 1998; Kovačević 2008; Matthes and Williams 2013; Snel 2014, 2016; Giergiel 2015). Memories of what once was, the destruction of personal networks and cultural milieus, the ossified post-war positions: all are frequently returning tropes. ‘The only thing I can offer is dialogue or, if you wish, spending time together in the space of language’, the author Aleksandar Hemon said in an interview (Knight 2009, 95). From a political and social perspective, the search for affirmation about what took place during the war has been the mission of the various truth commissions and reconciliation initiatives, and has engaged many groups in civil society. The statistics and evidence that have been published not only constitute the basis for the continuing legal processes, but also provide legitimacy for the establishment of memorial sites such as the one in Srebrenica (Nettelfield and Wagner 2014). One of the main themes in the academic literature about post-Dayton Bosnia, with its focus on the uses of history and the importance of power relations to the process of identifying what

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to transmit, has been remembrance and amnesia (Sorabji 2006; Markowitz 2010; Halilovich 2013; Henig 2015, Raudvere *in press*). A recent example of just how much fiction can matter in achieving such ambitions is the work of the Centre for Refugee and IDP Studies (CESI) at the University of Sarajevo. Funded by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), CESI is in the process of establishing an archive of memoirs and personal documents from the war, in which belles-lettres has a given place as testimony, essential to the writing of recent history (CESI 2016).

Displacement was a brutal reality during a war that saw almost half the Bosnian population forced into internal or external migration. The choice to concentrate on one particular novelist's work as the theme for this essay reflects the wish to highlight the interdependence among personal memory, history writing, and fiction when the imageries that arise in complex conflicts are communicated. This essay will therefore discuss Aleksandar Hemon's stories and counter-stories, arguing that his fictional texts can function as a valuable contribution to our understanding of the background and consequences of the war in the Balkans in the 1990s, and the moral implications of history writing. In this, the touchstone has been the author's own statement: 'I am not a novelist, I am a writer'. Place and belonging continue to be central themes in Hemon's six books to date and he regards his texts as invitations to share the experience of certain locations in a particular time of history, or as he put it in an interview, 'the only thing I can offer is dialogue or, if you wish, spending time together in the space of language' (Knight 2009, 95).

Born in Sarajevo in 1964, Hemon has made himself a name as a successful American writer and essayist in his second language, English. With his mastery of the new language, he treats it—as he has pointed out himself—without respect for its hierarchies, and constructs sentences that illustrate how he manages to give the seemingly minute profound significance (Crişu 2009; Koval 2013; Miočević 2013; Wachtel 2013; Frank 2014). Sometimes his enthusiasm for the handicraft of words takes over and the verbal richness makes the text opaque. There are even websites devoted to Hemon quotes and one-liners, which of course bring out the wit in his prose but rarely the gravity of the author's textual universe in which they originate. The settings in his fiction always shift between visualizations of a long-lost homeland (lost in more than one sense and perhaps never so homey as exile culture frequently makes it), the predicaments of diaspora, and excursions into history. Following masters such as Conrad, Nabokov, and Borges, Hemon's characters are at home everywhere and nowhere,

and their stories are contradictory—as is life. In Hemon's universe there is no history, but myriad histories. As the mastermind of the spaces we are invited to explore, Hemon includes himself among the positions taken in the text—only to introduce references to 'Aleksandars' or 'Hemons', who are patently not the Chicago-based writer.

There is consequently a constant interplay between the biographical individual and the literary persona in Hemon's texts, both as a narrative strategy to force the reader not to accept a single position and as a teller of history in which there is not one truth (Barry 2007; Ward 2011; Englund and Olsson 2013; Koval 2013; Miočević 2013; Weiner 2014; Giergiel 2015). He represents an important contemporary experience of displacement—in Bosnian lives as well as letters. Through his works, Hemon transforms the question of belonging into a matter of political, cultural, and existential importance. His stories are embedded in the events of the recent past, and yet are they part of the long chain of the development of modern prose. There are frequent nods to his literary forerunners, old and new, quoting, paraphrasing, and revolting against them. His readers are successively introduced to a personal world of references where the links to the biographical person is obvious.

It is not for nothing that Hemon holds a degree in comparative literature from the University of Sarajevo. The intertextual relationship with the modern canon is apparent as early as the second page of his debut collection of stories, when the reader encounters Joyce's 'snotgreen sea'. What could have been dismissed as youthful exuberance was from the start a carefully considered technique to grasp the complexity of Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav history. The splinters, wisps, and hints in his stories add to a larger picture of the past where academic writing is just one part. These are different domains, each with space for different genres that talk about the past, or, as Hemon said himself of his fragmentary narrative style, alluding to T. S. Eliot, 'These fragments I have shored against my ruins'. The Bosnian displacement is made into a theme that connects to a vast and varied audience, where the particular is formulated in such a way as to construct a space we are invited to occupy as readers. At the age of 49 he published his fifth book with the bold title *The Book of My Lives* (2013). Hardly the final summation of Hemon's life, but nevertheless a way of continuing the discussion with his readers about whose voices echo in his texts.

Hemon's narrative strategies when using auto-fiction and historical events in his texts are the starting point here. As an historian of religions with an interest in contemporary Bosnia and the global Bosnian dias-

pora, I am struck not so much by the artistic value of his work (which is significant), as with his chosen modes of composition, which flatly contradict the two most widespread oversimplifications about the recent conflicts and their context: the trope of age-old hatreds in the region that will never abate, and the idealized image of uncomplicated, multi-ethnic coexistence in the city of Sarajevo. Many academic analyses have been written on the subject of Bosnian and Balkan memory cultures, often with an emphasis on how monocultural narratives are constructed and communicated. This is not to say that Hemon should be thought neutral. In fact, quite the opposite. He is clearly aware of the potential of a piece of fiction, having said in an interview, ‘I do believe that imagination is necessary for any serious, ethical engagement with other people and the world, which is why literature provides access to a particular kind of human knowledge, which is not available otherwise’ (Knight 2009, 95). If we accept his invitation as set out in his six books, we have the opportunity to obtain new perspectives on what in the academic literature are considered to be behind the problems of Yugoslavia and the causes of the war.

LEAVING SARAJEVO, ALWAYS RETURNING TO SARAJEVO

Hemon’s first book, *The Question of Bruno* (2000), was a collection of short stories set in pre-war Sarajevo and Chicago—or perhaps chapters in a fragmentary wholeness of interlinked texts. The literary form here, as in Hemon’s subsequent fictional works, was well chosen to represent complex Bosnian cultural milieus as a comment on simplistic ‘identities’ forced on individuals and groups during wartime, and that lingered on in post-war rhetoric. Hemon’s narrative homeland is a border zone between the fictional and the documentary, between autobiography and regional history. The biographical individual was born into a family with a Ukrainian background on his father’s side. This genealogical fact is a factor in Hemon’s stories, just as the Austro-Hungarian influences on modern Bosnian history are much more evident in Hemon’s work than the more conventional dichotomy between the Ottoman legacy and modern reforms (Giergiel 2015). Modernity in Hemon’s universe has a longer and far more complex history.

Since 1992 Hemon has lived in Chicago, but he maintains regular contact with Bosnian public life, and before the war published some pieces in Bosnian that were to be the kernel of his later US debut. Hemon did not flee his native Bosnia; he happened to be in the US as a visitor in the

summer of 1992. That said, his choice of English was conscious, and he has recently said, ‘it was easier to convert those memories into stories in English than it would have been in Bosnian because Bosnian was too loaded with what was going on and too damaged with the absence of people who spoke it around me, which was directly related to the war’ (interview, Boswell 2015, 251). The upshot was that he more readily reached an international audience, while his books have been translated into Bosnian and he regularly appears in the Bosnian media. In a comparative analysis of the works of Hemon and Saša Stanišić (who writes in German), Frauke Matthes and David Williams note that ‘the existence of this double audience is not only a significant aspect of their “new internationalism”, but given their physical and linguistic displacement, a key dimension of their bi-focal narratives’ (2013, 28). This communicating in at least two directions and often many more is both a practical circumstance and an aesthetic preference. Hemon was immediately focused on reaching a new potential audience. His career as a writer was a success from the start and he has received attention from American critics in the most influential journals and magazines. Even before his first book appeared, Hemon had published in the *New Yorker*, *Esquire*, and *Paris Review*, all of which mattered to the US audience.

In *The Question of Bruno* we are introduced to Hemon’s world as it appears in these short stories and in his subsequent books: the writer and his family with its partly Ukrainian background, Sarajevo in the 1980s, immigrants in Chicago in the 1990s, and being connected and disconnected. Places, and especially cities, play an important role in Hemon’s texts. In the background there is the collapse of one state, Yugoslavia, and the bumpy road of another, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Hemon also introduces us to Chicago as a contemporary migrant city that has seen immigrants arrive from Eastern Europe since late nineteenth century, which is not only an incidental historical curiosity. This is a major theme in *The Lazarus Project* (2008), as was evident in the ways in which he pictured particular Bosnian experiences—with its (at least) two parallel stories (one of them about the police hunt for suspected anarchists propagators at the beginning of the twentieth century)—but also his invitation to the reader to look to other horizons. ‘Language has a better chance of suspending the voyeuristic position because language, by its very nature, engages with our inner world since it is rooted in it. ... So the inversions of hierarchies are inherent in literature and language and allow for recognizing the meaning and importance of those ordinary, small things’ (in an interview,

Boswell 2015, 261). Hemon is neither a historian nor an ethnographer, yet he still draws on his own and others' experiences. He does not claim to be a witness to events and places—he is far too sophisticated a writer for that, or, as he says, 'I do not use books to establish those positions [represented in his fiction] or to have my characters be spokespersons for my beliefs, not even those I'm closest to in agreement' (in an interview, Boswell 2015, 256). His characters, it seems, are not created to be sympathized with, but to think with.

What in *The Question of Bruno* could have been a conventional introductory short story about childhood summer memories with some Yugoslav nostalgic elements is instead interleaved into a brusque reminder of the repressive side of life in Yugoslavia. The child, the voice of the narrative, witnesses uncle Julius' recollections of his time as a student in Moscow in the 1930s and his experiences from Stalin's camps after the Second World War (Hemon 2000, 9ff.). The memories include as a subtheme the appalling fate of one of the children in the camp and the boy's complete moral destruction and physical desolation, which stands in sharp contrast to the Yugoslav childhood in a Sarajevan middle-class family and the beauty of summer days long gone. The two themes merge into a powerful story about personal memories and history writing.

The main character 'realized that his previous life was completely beyond anyone's reach and that he could entirely reinvent it, create a legend, like a spy' (Hemon 2000, 192). The spy is a recurring trope in his early works, and is an apposite image of Hemon's construction of himself as a writer: he operates in disguise through his different characters, uncovering the hidden and the clandestine, and is disloyal to his employer, in Hemon's case, the reader of the text. Lives smashed into smithereens are reconfigured in an exposé of life in Bosnia in the twentieth century. Throughout the short stories there are many voices that together build up a persona (sometimes given the name Jozef Pronek, who appears again as the protagonist in *Nowhere Man* of 2002) where fragments link to Hemon's biography. It is said of Pronek that he 'was perpetually dazed, for the involuntary-memory sensations were no longer routine perceptions, but rather an unpleasant burden, which forced him to wallow dolefully in his previous life' (Hemon 2000, 197–198). It is not only the characters who speak, but the voice of the collection as a whole that addresses the reader, issuing a reminder: 'But while we are up to our waists in Pronek's stream of consciousness, dear reader, fly-fishing for the psyche, the world did not stop revolving, the clock did not stop ticking' (Hemon 2000, 199). Nothing stands still

in Hemon's world. For better or worse, there is always the next move. Yet memories are the capstone of the stories.

Hemon watched the war on the television, sitting newly arrived in Chicago, surrounded by Americans with little or no understanding of what was at stake. 'My story is boring: I was not in Sarajevo when the war began; I felt hopelessness and guilt as I watched the destruction of my hometown on TV' (2000, 68). One part of *The Question of Bruno*, like several of the other books, is formulated as letters from besieged Sarajevo, an experience that is not Hemon's own. Yet as it is for everyone in the Bosnian diaspora, so it is for him—the siege is integrated into his life. When the war ends, Pronek, the main character of the narrative, decides to go back to Sarajevo, and he starts to visualize his return. The city is the same and everything has changed. Even at this sensitive point in the story, or perhaps because of it, Pronek's inner voice and his vision of returning is the subject of the narrator's comment, both on the shift in voice (now in italics to underline the dreamlike character of the words) and the choice of language. 'Presently, we will give him his voice back and let him talk for himself. Ideally, of course, he would speak in his native language, but, unfortunately, that is not possible. Here are, then, his authentic, fresh, and realistic experiences' (2000, 201). What is claimed to be authentic and realistic is the dreamlike vision of going back. In his parents' apartment, Pronek happens upon relics from his childhood and finds 'the complete works of Joseph Conrad, half of which were gone, burned in the stove'. Even at this highly emotional moment, he establishes the Western canon as his heritage; it is clear the books had been used as fuel during the siege, and had gone up in smoke like the National Library of Sarajevo when it was shelled at the beginning of the war (2000, 203). His heritage is gone in all respects, and though he is merely someone who lived through the war from Chicago, he nevertheless visualizes himself lining up for water as everybody did in the besieged city: 'And right in the line of my rapidly fainting gaze there is a rose, still warm, filled up with the blood oozing out of my head. But I could never imagine the moment of death, I could never imagine vanishing, so my imagination stays fixed on the rose' (Hemon 2000, 206). The pool of blood from the victims in form of a rose refers to the spontaneous marks that were painted on the streets of Sarajevo to commemorate a spot where people had died during the shelling of the besieged city (Raudvere in press). It appears to be Sarajevo itself that we hear in this short story, talking through Pronek, a man who was not an eyewitness, but a by-stander in Chicago.

Bosnia's place at the crossroads of three empires, with all that meant for its politics and the ambitions of its religious and ethnic minorities, has left a palette of memories. Hemon writes, 'Most of this story is a consequence of irresponsible imagination and shameless speculation. ... Parts of it, however, washed against my shores, having floated on a sea of history books, dotted with islands of black-and-white photos. A considerable part reached me after it passed through tunnels and mazes of the family memories and legends' (2000, 91). With this reference to Eliot's fragments and ruins, the writer constitutes himself as an interconnector between realities, using his skills to visualize others' truths. He ends the short story about an accordion, with its almost emblematic quality as the instrument of a countryside bard, by introducing blind uncle Theodore, who like uncle Julius is yet another victim of political turbulence, stuck in a Serb-controlled part of Bosnia. By referring to his own life, Hemon once again opens the door to the writer's workshop when ending his first book. 'Most of my family is scattered across Canada. This story was written in Chicago (where I live) on the subway, after a long day of arduous work as a parking assistant, ad 1996' (2000, 92). The voice takes many guises by closing in on the biographical Aleksandar Hemon or distancing itself from him.

Hemon's stories always have a long-term perspective. The transmission of the past is always present in memories and narratives, which constitute the framework reshaped and contradicted throughout the stories. Jozef Pronek, the anti-hero introduced to the readers in *The Question of Bruno*, is in *Nowhere man* (2002) newly arrived in Chicago, from where he watches the war in ex-Yugoslavia from a distance. There is no Yugoslav nostalgia in the descriptions of Sarajevo in the 1970s and 1980s. It gives the background to the war and hints through the reasoning and action of the characters that another political development was possible at that time. But things took another direction and Hemon takes upon him to transmit both the possibilities and the chaos after the disruption of Yugoslavia. For *Nowhere man* Hemon uses a long epigraph from Bruno Schulz that ends with a question for the historian, the journalist, or anyone believing in true stories: 'What is to be done with events that have no place of their own in time; events that have occurred too late, after the whole of time has been distributed, divided and allotted; events that have been left in the cold, unregistered, hanging in the air, errant and homeless?' Hemon's novels and stories are a major contribution to émigré literature, especially through his play with the characters, whom he provides with a language that pinpoints the sense of being uprooted and homeless. Yet it

is the change and motion that flow through his texts that are his sources of creativity. Hemon's use of language makes these destinies accessible to the reader in a way that it is possible to share in them. In many ways he adheres to a tradition of diaspora literature, but he puts his own mark on the genre.

Throughout his publications Hemon sketches a vivid picture of Sarajevo in the 1980s. This is perhaps his most important contribution as a history writer in the guise of a fiction writer. The standard explanations for the war and the atrocities—ethnicity and religion—are absent. The characters in Hemon's stories act and make decisions based on geopolitics, ethics, emotion, greed, or pure accident. They are not created to denote specific groups or ideologies, but to show how quickly the customary and habitual can change. As Nataša Kovačević observes, 'Hemon comments on a phenomenon that in fact contains a significant potential in terms of exploring both the decline of and lost potential for reform' (2008, 185), and continues that 'Hemon traces this utopian possibility in the Yugoslav urban cultural milieu that emerges in the 1980s, both Yugoslavia's high point and its greatest victim, its last flourish' (2008, 187).

Hemon's protagonist in *Nowhere man*, Pronek, receives a letter from his childhood friend Mirza, who is trapped in Sarajevo. The letter constitutes a short chapter, said to have been 'translated by Jozef Pronek', and this information also serves as the title (2002, 129ff.). The letter is dated December 1995 at the end of the siege and tells of Mirza's dream-like recollections, with their intermingling of violence, death, and beauty (an apparent parallel to Pronek's vision of being hit during a shell attack). But his words fail him, and as the letter says, in Pronek's translation, 'I am sorry. I talk too much. We in Sarajevo have nobody to talk, just each other, nobody wants to listen to these stories. I cannot talk more. You talk now. I am waiting for your letter. You must write me' (2000, 134). By means of this construction, Hemon has witnesses from two fronts. Neither is more authentic than the other: the trapped man with no foreign languages and the newly arrived man who tries his best to give a voice to his friend with the little he has of the new language. The reader recognizes the striving for a language as a fundamental trope in Hemon's writing.

Rora, in *The Lazarus Project*, is fittingly defined by Marta Koval in her study of the multicultural dimensions to subjective history-making in the novel as 'a postmodernist version of the trickster' (2013, 200) who has stayed on in Sarajevo. As a narrator in one of the parallel stories in the novel, Rora is full of tales that are delivered in a seemingly endless flow.

Accurate or not, they tell of bargaining, deals, and unholy alliances in the besieged city, eschewing any simplistic picture of victims and perpetrators, and rather testifying to the fact that man is man's wolf in wartime. Rora is not only the producer of oral tales and anecdotes, he is also a photographer, lending his skills to those who want reality to be documented, be it a naive Western journalist or a criminal gang leader. In the portrayal of Rora and his efforts, the storyteller appears as the more sustainable moral witness, while the documentary photos can serve any purpose and are always attached to someone's truth. Hemon shows an obvious kinship, and not only in the choice of writing in a second language, with W.G. Sebald in his combination of fiction, autobiography, and documentary elements in his prose. Both writers use photographs to support, contradict, and problematize the factual part of their fiction; and both express that they have undertaken a responsibility to tell of more than can be fitted in conventional fiction. Still, there is a generational distance between them. One is Hemon's references to popular culture in his strive to grasp the spirit of Sarajevo in the 1980s and Chicago some 30 years later, and he is much closer to irony and wit than Sebald.

HISTORY AND HISTORIES

Hemon was anything but a *tabula rasa* when he arrived in Chicago in 1992, armed with his university studies in comparative literature. Well acquainted with the Western literary canon, and apparently using it to navigate life as a migrant and as a future author, Hemon's conscious shift in language in his literary work places him firmly in the coterie of authors who have successfully made the same choice, most notably Joseph Conrad, Vladimir Nabokov, and W. G. Sebald. Like these three, Hemon has enjoyed considerable international success from the beginning. The literary postmodern vogue at the time of his debut suited him well (although he has repeatedly dismissed the idea that he should be regarded as a postmodern author), and he piled on the irony with his dark tone and references to what was then a very recent war. He quickly became a vital voice among contemporary American novelists, and he was often singled out as a European voice by the US media, while reviewers elsewhere have pointed to his descriptions of homelessness as an inevitable condition in modernity. The start of Hemon's literary career, shared in a new language, has been mythologized by journalists writing about him, many times taking details from Hemon's fiction as facts about the writer's life. When he

said in an interview with Timothy Boswell that the ‘past is an interesting thing in terms of displacement because access to it becomes a crucial issue, imaginatively speaking, intellectually speaking’ (2015, 251), Hemon was pointing to the two modes of comprehension when trying to represent a terrible period in human history such as a war: the artistic and the more academic, where the former trusts in the power of expression, and the latter in a sensible use of data.

Hemon has published for 20 years now and is a well-established voice among American novelists. His work has a dual enticement that speaks of the condition for many in the modern era with all its huge waves of migration, and at the same time of a very specific European experience from a country that both discursively and politically existed in the border zone between the old West and Central Europe, and that paid the price for the lifting of the Iron Curtain. A repressive regime collapsed, but was soon followed by a series of long conflicts, a new state split between the many cantons established by the Dayton Peace Agreement, and unhealed wounds from both the Yugoslav era and the war itself. The academic and the author here share the dilemma of how to communicate the complexity of the situation: ‘The ethnic wars, the ontology of identity, foreclose this type of experimentation, permanently labelling Sarajevo as the new Auschwitz, the image that Hemon’s narrative attempts to complicate’ (Kovačević 2008, 187). On several occasions, Hemon has underlined that for him literature is negotiation, a point of contact between the writer and readers who ‘have stepped into this space. And if they don’t step into this space, they’re not going to want to be alone in that space. ... They’re not alone in this space; in this way we share an experience’ (in an interview, Knight 2009, 93). This should not be read as a claim of universality. Rather, it is a declaration of his trust in language as means of sharing through representation. The reader is to encounter something so radically different as other people’s lives, and the responsibility rests with the author to create an accessible space.

The use of identity games in the stories is not simply a literary practice. Hemon’s choice of shifting perspectives is deliberate, playfully urging the reader to distrust his text in order to discover that there is more than one answer to the questions he raises. The horrible realities of war in family memories and contemporary experience continue as a key element in his work, from his debut to his latest novel, *The Making of Zombie Wars* (2015), in which US involvement in the Middle East is the main theme. It is Hemon’s most American novel to date, but the Bosnian experience is

still part of the setting. It is a slapstick comedy, yet still poses the agonizing question of who the zombies are. The earlier books are distinctly comic or absurd in parts, but this novel stands in sharp contrast to the more severe recollections in *The Book of My Lives*, with its very personal account of how to survive the experience of a baby daughter's death. Shifting identities, tragic experiences of loss and death, or comedy and puns—Hemon's texts always raise questions about history and the art of history writing. Regardless of his faith in language, his literary works always acknowledge books and archives, footnotes, and citations (and not only of a literary character). In *The Making of Zombie Wars*, Hemon uses a quotation from Spinoza as an epigraph (paired with a quote from George Bush): 'The mind can neither imagine anything, nor recollect past things, except while the body endures'. A zombie is the epitomic image of the body without a soul or self, walking will-less and speechless. In Hemon's hands, the zombies in the midst of the novel's hilarious plot are again a most serious reminder of the need for language and points of reference—this loss of fundamental human capabilities is the invisible scar left by many war experiences.

With the integration of photographs into the texts (which is a major component in *The Lazarus Project*), Hemon pauses to reflect on other forms of representation that are conventionally regarded as more reliable as a documentary form (Mikulinsky 2009; Fjellestad 2015). 'The cameras and pictures are there so as to show that they can't quite formulate experience on their own, at least in the domain of literature, and, I think, in the world at large' (in an interview, Boswell 2015, 261). To return to the initial question about the use of literary representations in the study of contemporary Bosnia and Herzegovina, it must be asked whether novels and short stories should really be considered sources in the academic sense of the term. Do they provide something that other modes of expression do not? Hemon's literary universe, with its recurring characters, places, and events, encompasses atrocities and joy as well as the many historical coincidences that breathe life into the contradictions in the span of individual lives. Hemon is certainly not a nostalgic writer. It is because of all their idiosyncrasies that his texts voice a specific Bosnian experience. Are they perhaps more true because they claim to tell made-up stories? Hemon's fiction contradicts the conventional phrases about Sarajevo as a melting-pot, the harmonious home of a variety of religious denominations that had no wish to acknowledge the searing tensions that existed before the war in the 1990s, and that paved the way for chauvinism and a brutal siege.

CRIES AND WHISPERS

The virtually interminable production of books and articles on cultural memory, when graphed chronologically, resembles over the past twenty years and more a steadily mounting fever of preoccupation which might be said to resemble the rising physical fever of a hospital patient whose condition is registered on a medical chart. In the same sense, as well as because of our currently pervasive archivalisation, we are living in a culture of hyperamnesia. (Connerton 2009, 146)

Fictionalization is a too simplistic label to put on what takes place in Hemon's texts. He could have used other types of communication such as journalism, academic writing, or politics. But the literary text is his chosen mode and the 'bi-focal narratives' discussed by Matthes and Williams are the tools with which Hemon verbalizes both the experience of war and life in diaspora (2013). Hemon's work is a good guide to what a Bosnian identity can be, problematizing the issues of ethnicity and generation (although not gender to any substantial degree). In this way, his books are very much part of the collective memory of Bosnian displacement in the late twentieth century, as they contradict and deconstruct the imagery offered by the standard political and religious rhetoric. Absolute history is contrasted in his work with people's opportunities for conscious choice in their lives, and indeed with situations where people feel trapped, the victims of circumstances they have no control over. In using Bosnia and its contemporary history to say something about the human condition, Hemon connects childhood and teenage memories with contemporary global politics. Human vulnerability to political pressure, be it migrants in Chicago at different ends of the twentieth century, the repression in Yugoslavia, or the horrors of the Second World War and Stalinism, is the common thread in Hemon's texts. Yet while it is a cause of pain, death, and disruption for individuals and families, it is also shown to be a source of creative energy. Being bilingual and bicultural, Hemon declares, 'is a privileged situation for me. It does not torment me. I have twice as much of everything that one needs from language as I would with one language' (in an interview, Boswell 2015, 247). Writing novels and stories can be a move along the same line as recovering DNA evidence or establishing the numbers involved in cases of genocide or crimes against humanity. By constantly reminding the reader of the faint line between history and

memory, Hemon sustains an ethical reflection on position and truth. Back to the family gathering, Hemon lets the mother in the story snort, “The trouble with the Hemons”, she said, “is that they always get much too excited about things they imagine to be real”, and she refers to the stories in circulation at a family reunion as ‘the Hemon propaganda’ (2000, 116).

There is something that Hemon wants us to learn from reading, as he himself has learned from his passionate involvement in literature; something that transcends the specifics of his home country and diasporic lives. To walk in the shoes of his fictional characters is not necessarily to observe differences, but rather to be confronted with ourselves in the shape of someone else. As alternative voices speaking out against chauvinistic nationalism, Hemon’s characters, no matter how weird they can seem from time to time, and his language alike employ the imagery of the shattered remnants of a cruel war as a source of great potential, and he asks us to read fiction for the sake of reality. His texts give voice to identities that are disconnected from territory, to identities that are not and were never predicated on territory. Hemon’s fiction is an excellent lesson in recent history and a compass to navigate by.

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